

# The Text

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## [Part 1: The World around Us]

## [A. General Principles]

## [1. THE SIX PRINCIPLES AND THEIR SIX RANKINGS]

[31] 1. Abū Naṣr said: The principles that constitute bodies and their accidents—which are of six sorts—are of six major rankings, and each ranking embraces one of the sorts. The first cause is in the first ranking; the secondary causes are in the second ranking; the active intellect is in the third ranking; the soul is in the fourth ranking; form is in the fifth ranking; material is in the sixth ranking. What is in the first ranking cannot be many; rather, it is only one, unique. What is in each of the rest of the rankings is many. Three of them are neither bodies nor in bodies—namely, the first cause, the secondary ones, and the active intellect. And three are in bodies even though they are not themselves bodies—namely, soul, form, and material. There are six kinds of bodies: the heavenly body, the rational animal, nonrational animals, plants, minerals, and the four elements. The whole brought together from these six kinds of bodies is the world.

## [2. THE FIRST CAUSE AND THE SECONDARY CAUSES]

2. The first [cause] is what ought to be believed to be the deity. It is the proximate cause for the existence of the secondary [causes] and for the existence of the active intellect. The secondary ones are the causes for the existence of the heavenly bodies; from them, [32] these bodies attain their substances; and from each of the secondary ones results the existence of every one of the heavenly bodies. From the highest of the secondary [causes] in rank results the existence of the first heavens, and from the lowest of them results the existence of the sphere of the moon. From each of the intermediate ones results the existence of each of the planets that are between these two.<sup>1</sup> The secondary [causes] are as numerous as the heavenly bodies; and the secondary [causes] ought to be said to be spiritual existents, angels, and the like.

1. Omitting *al-falakain* (“two planets”) with Feyzullah 1279. The idea is that the planets belong between the first heavens and the sphere of the moon.

## [3. THE ACTIVE INTELLECT]

3. The activity of the active intellect is looking out for<sup>2</sup> the rational animal and seeking for it to obtain the ultimate ranking of perfection that a human being can obtain, namely, ultimate happiness—which is for a human being to reach the ranking of the active intellect. Now that comes about only by attaining separation from bodies, not having need of anything lesser—not body, material, nor accident—for subsistence, and by always remaining at that perfection.

While the active intellect is one in essence, its rank also embraces those rational animals who have become transcendent and achieved happiness. Of the active intellect, it ought to be said that it is the trustworthy spirit and the holy spirit.<sup>3</sup> It is called by names resembling these two, while its ranking is called kingship and names resembling that.

## [4. THE RANKING OF THE SOUL]

4. The principles in the ranking of the soul are many. Among them are the souls of the heavenly bodies, the souls of the rational animal, and the souls of the nonrational animals. Those belonging to the rational animal are the rational faculty, the appetitive faculty, the imaginative faculty, and the sense-perceptive faculty.

It is by the rational faculty that [33] a human being embraces the sciences and the arts; distinguishes between noble and base actions and moral habits; deliberates about what ought to be done or not done; and, in addition, apprehends the useful and the harmful, the pleasurable and the painful. Of the rational, some is theoretical and some practical. Of the practical, some involves skill and some deliberation. By the theoretical, a human being embraces knowledge of what is not such as to be carried out at all; and by the practical, a human being becomes cognizant of<sup>4</sup> what

2. The term is *'ināya*, which also means “providence.”

3. The terms are *al-rūḥ al-amīn* and *rūḥ al-qudus* and are usually taken as epithets of Gabriel. The first could also be rendered as “faithful spirit” or even “trusted spirit.” It occurs once in the Quran (26:193), whereas *rūḥ al-qudus* occurs four times. In the first three (2:87, 2:253, and 5:113), it is used in reference to Jesus and is said to have strengthened him. At 16:102, it refers to the agent by whom the Quran was revealed.

4. The verb translated as “becomes cognizant of” is *ya'rif*, the present of *'araḥa*. To distinguish *'araḥa* and its derivatives from *'alima* and its derivatives, the former is translated as “to be cognizant of” and so forth, while the latter is translated as “to know” and *'ilm* as “science” or “knowledge.” The goal of such a distinction is to preserve the difference between *gignōskein* and *epistasthai* reflected by these terms.

is such as to be carried out by means of his volition. By the skillful, the arts and crafts are embraced; and by the deliberative, there comes about thought and deliberation concerning each thing that ought to be carried out or not.

By the appetitive [faculty], there comes about the human appetite for seeking or fleeing something, longing for or loathing it, and preferring or avoiding it. By it, come about hatred and love, friendship and enmity, fear and trust, anger and contentedness, harshness and compassion, and the rest of the affections of the soul.

The imaginative [faculty] is what preserves the traces of sense-perceptions after they have been absent from sense and, in waking and sleep, combines some with others and separates some from others in combinations or separations, some of which are accurate and some false. In addition, among the actions and moral habits, it apprehends those that are useful and harmful, pleasurable and painful, but not those that are noble and base.

What pertains to the sense-perceptive [faculty] is evident. It is the one that apprehends sense-perceptible things by means of the five senses of which everyone is cognizant. It apprehends the pleasurable and the painful, but does not distinguish the harmful and the useful, nor the noble and the base.

5. Some nonrational animals are found to have the three remaining faculties apart from the rational one. For them, the imaginative faculty takes the place of the rational faculty in the rational animal. And some are found to have only the sense-perceptive faculty and the appetitive faculty.

6. The souls of the heavenly bodies are of a species different from these souls [34] and are distinct from them with respect to their substances. By them,<sup>5</sup> the heavenly bodies become substantial; and through them, they move in a circle. They are of a more venerable, perfect, and excellent existence than the souls of the species of animals around us. That is because they are in no way potential, not at any moment. Rather, they are always actual because their intelligibles have been continuously attained in them from the outset and because they are always intellecting them.

5. Reading *bi-hā* for sense and in keeping with the parallel *'an-hā* of the next clause, rather than *bi-hadhā* with Najjar and all the mss.

Now our own souls are potential at first, then become actual. That is, at first they are receptive traits disposed so as to intellect the intelligibles. Then, afterward, they attain the intelligibles; and at that point, they become actual.

The heavenly bodies have neither the sense-perceptive nor the imaginative soul. Rather, they have only the soul that intellects. In this respect, they are somewhat comparable to the rational soul. What the heavenly souls intellect are things that are intelligible in their substances, namely, the substances separate from material. Each of these souls intellects the first [cause], its [own] essence, and the secondary [cause] that gave it its substance.

7. Most of the intelligibles a human being intellects pertaining to things in material are not intellected by the heavenly souls because by their substances they are of too high a rank to intellect the intelligibles beneath them. Now the first [cause] intellects its essence, even though its essence is, in some respect, all of the existents. Indeed, when it intellects its essence, it has already intellected all of the existents in some respect because each of the rest of the existents secures existence only from its existence. Each of the secondary [causes] intellects its [own] essence and intellects the first [cause].

8. The active intellect intellects the first [cause] and all the secondary [causes], and it intellects its essence. It also makes things that are not intelligibles in their essences intelligibles. Things that are intelligibles in their essences are things separate from bodies that are not constituted by material in any way, and these are intelligibles in their substances. For the substances of these [intelligibles] only intellect and are intellected; indeed, they are intellected insofar as they intellect, and what is intellected of them is what intellects.

The rest of the intelligibles are not like that. That is, whereas rocks and plants, for example, are intellected, [35] what is intellected of them does not also intellect. Those that are bodies or in bodies are not intellected by their substances, nor is anything pertaining to them that has the rank of substance an intellect in actuality. Rather, it is the active intellect that makes them intelligibles in actuality. It makes some of them intellects in actuality and raises them from the level of existence they are in to a rank of existence higher than what they were given by nature.

Consequently, the rational intellect by which a human being is a human being is not in its substance an intellect in actuality. It is not endowed by

nature to be an intellect in actuality, but the active intellect causes it to become an intellect in actuality and makes the rest of the things intelligible in actuality for the rational faculty. When the rational faculty attains to being an intellect in actuality, that intellect it now is in actuality also becomes similar to the separate things and it intellects its essence that is [now] intellect in actuality. And what is intellect of it becomes what intellects. At that point, it comes to be a substance that is intellect in that it is an intelligible insofar as it intellects. And, at that point, what intellects, what is intellect, and intellect come to be a single thing itself in it. Through this, it becomes such as to be in the rank of the active intellect. And when a human being obtains this rank, his happiness is perfected.

9. The status of the active intellect with respect to the human being is that of the sun with respect to vision. For the sun gives light to vision so that, through the light procured from the sun, vision becomes actual viewing after having been potential viewing. By that light, it views the sun itself, which is the cause for it having vision in actuality. Moreover, the colors that were potentially seen become seen in actuality, and the vision that was potential becomes actual vision. Similarly, the active intellect provides a human being with something it traces on his rational faculty, the status of that thing with respect to the rational soul being the status of light with respect to vision.

By means of that thing, the rational soul intellects [36] the active intellect; and by means of it, things that are potentially intellect become intellect in actuality. By means of it, a human being, who is potentially an intellect, becomes an intellect in actuality and in perfection until he comes to be in proximity to the rank of the active intellect. So he becomes an intellect in his essence after having not been like that and an intelligible in his essence after having not been like that. And he becomes divine after having been material.<sup>6</sup> This is the function of the active intellect, and for this it is called the active intellect.

#### [5. FORM AND MATERIAL]

10. Form is the bodily substance in a body, like the shape of a bed in a bed. And material is like the wood of a bed. So form is that by which embodied substance becomes actual substance, and material is that by which it comes to be potential substance. For a bed is a potential bed insofar as it

6. Or, literally, "hylic," the term being *hayūlānī* ("primordial material").

is wood, and it becomes an actual bed when its shape is attained in the wood. Form is constituted in material, and material is a subject to carry forms. For forms are not constituted in themselves, but need to exist in a subject; and material is their subject. The existence of material is only for the sake of the forms.

It is as though the first purpose were only that forms come to exist. Since they are constituted only in a particular subject, material is established as a subject to carry forms. Therefore, when forms do not exist, the existence of material is in vain. And nothing in natural existents is in vain. Therefore, it is not possible for primary material<sup>7</sup> to exist devoid of a particular form. For material is merely a principle and cause in the manner of a subject for carrying a form. It is not an agent or an end, nor does it have existence by itself without a form. Both material and form are called [37] “nature,” except that this name is more fitting for form.

An example of that is vision. For it is a substance. The body of the eye is its material, and the faculty by which it views is its form. By the two of them coming together, vision comes to be vision in actuality. And the rest of the natural bodies are like that.

11. As long as souls are not perfected and do not perform their actions, they are merely faculties and traits disposed to accept the traces of things: like vision before it views and before the traces of things viewed are attained in it, the imaginative [faculty] before the traces of things imagined are attained in it, and the rational [faculty] before the traces of the intelligibles are attained in it and they [all] become forms. For when the traces are actually attained—I mean, the traces of sense-perceptions in the sense-perceptive faculty, imagined things in the imaginative faculty, and the traces of intelligibles in the rational faculty—they then become different from the forms, even though these traces attained in the previous traits are similar to forms in material. They are called forms only due to similarity.

Those most remote from being forms are the traces of the intelligibles attained in the rational faculty. They are almost separate from material, and their existence in the rational faculty is very dissimilar from the existence of form in material. When the intellect actually reaches the point of

7. The term is *al-mādda al-ūlā* and is thus to be understood as different from hylic material; see preceding note.



being similar to the active intellect, it is not then a form nor similar to a form even though one faction homonymously also calls all disembodied substances forms. They establish some forms as separate from material, [that is,] not needing it and being rid of it; and others as not [38] separate from material, namely, the forms we have mentioned. This is one of the divisions of the homonymous noun.

12. There are rankings of the forms needing material. The lowest in ranking are the forms of the four elements. And these four are in four materials. The four materials are of one and the same species. For the one that is material for fire can itself be established as material for air and for the rest of the elements. The remaining forms are the forms of bodies arising from the mixing and blending of the elements, and some are higher than others. For the forms of minerals are of a higher ranking than the forms of the elements; the forms of plants—their variance from one another notwithstanding—are of a higher ranking than the forms of minerals; and the forms of the species of nonrational animals—their variance from one another notwithstanding—are higher than the forms of plants. Next, the forms of the rational animal—namely, the natural traits it has insofar as it is rational—are higher than the forms of nonrational animals.

13. Both form and primary material are the most defective of these principles in existence. That is because each of them requires the other for its existence and constitution. For form cannot be constituted except in material. In its substance and nature, material exists for the sake of the form, and its indeedness<sup>8</sup> is for it to carry the form. When form does not exist, material does not exist—since this material truly has no form at all in its essence. Therefore, its existence devoid of form is a vain existence; and with natural affairs, it is not at all possible for something to exist in vain.

8. The term is *inniyyatuhā*. At the very beginning of his *Book of Letters*, Alfarabi explains “the meaning of ‘indeed’ [*inna*] is firmness, permanence, perfection, and sureness in existence and in knowledge of a thing. . . . Therefore, the philosophers call perfect existence the ‘indeedness’ [*inniyya*] of the thing—namely, its very whatness—and they say ‘and what is the indeedness of the thing,’ meaning what is its most perfect existence, namely, its whatness”; see Alfarabi, *Book of Letters*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (forthcoming), part 1, chap. 1, sec. 1; for the Arabic text, see *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-Hurūf*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1969). A revised edition of the Arabic, based on new manuscript evidence, will accompany the forthcoming English translation. See also *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-ʿAlfāz al-Mustaʿmala fī al-Manṭiq*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), sec. 7/1, 45:4–11; R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 1:39b.

Similarly, when material does not exist, [39] form does not exist inasmuch as form needs a subject in order to be constituted.

14. Next, each of the two has a particularly characteristic defect and a particularly characteristic perfection that the other does not have. For by means of form, a body has the more perfect of its dual existence—namely, its actual existence. And by means of material, a body has the more defective of its dual existence—namely, its potential existence. Now form does not exist so that material may exist by means of it nor because it was created for the sake of material. Yet material exists for the sake of form—I mean, so that form will be constituted by it. So, in this, form surpasses material. And material surpasses form in that it does not need to be in a subject to exist, whereas form does need that. Material has no contrary, nor is it opposed by privation. Yet form has privation or a contrary. And it is not possible for what has privation or a contrary to be always existent.

Forms are similar to accidents, since forms are constituted in a subject; and accidents are also constituted in a subject. Forms are distinct<sup>9</sup> from accidents in that the subjects of accidents are not established so that the accidents may exist nor to carry the accidents. Yet the subjects of forms—namely, materials—are established only to carry forms. Now material is a subject for contrary forms and thus receives a form and the contrary of that form or its privation. So it continuously transfers from form to form without interruption and is not more appropriate for a [given] form than for its contrary. Rather, it is equally receptive to the contraries.

## [B. Particulars Concerning the Incorporeal Substances]

### [1. INCORPOREAL SUBSTANCES OTHER THAN THE FIRST CAUSE]

15. None of the defects that particularly characterize form and material attaches to the incorporeal substances. For none of them is constituted in a subject; nor is the existence of any of them for the sake of anything else—not as material, as an instrument for something else, or as serving anything else—nor does any of them need an existence that it procures in the future by acting on something else or by something else acting on it in order to increase. Moreover, there is no contrary to any of them nor any

9. Literally, “are separate from” (*tufāriq*).

opposing privation. And these are more appropriately substances than [40] are form and material.

16. The secondary [causes] and the active intellect are beneath the first [cause]. Even if these ways of being defective do not attach to them, they are not exempt from other defects. That is because their substances are procured from something else, their existence follows upon the existence of something else, and their substances do not obtain perfection such that they suffice unto themselves without procuring existence from something else. Rather, their existence emanates to them from what is more perfect in existence. This is a defect common to every existence other than the first [cause].

17. Moreover, not one of the secondary [causes] nor the active intellect is so sufficient that, by limiting itself to intellecting its essence alone, it attains a splendid and radiant existence or delight, pleasure, and beauty. Rather, for that, it needs to intellect the essence of another more perfect and more splendid being in addition to its [own] essence. So in the essence of each of them there is, in this respect, some kind of multiplicity. For in some respect the essence of what intellects a particular thing becomes that thing, even though it nonetheless has an essence particularly characteristic of it. It is as though the virtue of its essence does not become complete except by some kind of multiplicity assisting it. Therefore, multiplicity in what makes something be a substance becomes a defect in the existence of that thing.

Yet it is not in their natures to have a splendid, beautiful, and radiant existence by intellecting what is beneath them in existence, what exists from each of them, or what follows the existence of any one of the existents. For none of these is bound to or inherent in any of them. Nor in order for something else to exist from any of them does the essence of any of them require an instrument or [41] another state apart from its [own] essence and substance. Rather, simply by itself, its essence suffices for it not to have recourse to an instrument or a state other than its substance for bringing something else into existence.

18. The souls that are in the heavenly bodies are free from the modes of defect that are in form and in material. Yet they are in subjects, and in this respect they resemble forms. Still, their subjects are not material. Rather, each of them has a particularly characteristic subject that cannot

be a subject for anything other than it; and in this respect it is separate from form.

All the modes of defect that exist for the secondary [causes] exist for them,<sup>10</sup> and they exceed in defectiveness in that the multiplicity giving them substance exceeds what gives substances to the secondary [causes]. For they attain beauty and delight only by intellecting their essence, intellecting the secondary [causes], and intellecting the first [cause]. Then, in addition, it follows from the existence giving them substance that they give existence to other existents external to their substances. Moreover, they do not suffice so that existence emanates from them to something else without an instrument and without another state coming about. So in each of the two respects, they require other things external to their essences. By “the two respects,” I mean their being constituted and that they give existence to something else.

The secondary [causes] are free from whatever is external to their essence, and that holds for each of the two respects. They do not, however, procure splendor and beauty by intellecting the existents that are beneath them nor by their existence being limited to them without existence emanating from it to something else. [42]

19. When the sense-perceptive and imaginative souls that are in animals are perfected by attaining the traces of sense-perceived and imagined things, they become similar to the separate things. This similarity does not, however, draw them beyond the nature of material<sup>11</sup> existence and the nature of the forms.

When the rational part of the soul is perfected and becomes an intellect in actuality, it closely resembles the separate things. Yet it procures the perfection of existence, becoming actual, splendor, radiance, and beauty not just by intellecting the things above it in rank, but by intellecting the things that are beneath it in rank as well and by greatly magnifying the multiplicity in what is made substantial by means of it. When it becomes completely separated from all the parts of the soul apart from it, its existence also comes to be limited to itself alone and does not emanate to anything apart from it.<sup>12</sup>

10. That is, the souls of the heavenly bodies.

11. Literally, “hylic” (*al-hayulani*); see above, sec. 9, n. 6.

12. Here and in the next paragraph the antecedent is “the rational part of the soul” (*al-juz' al-na'iq min al-nafs*).

When it becomes separated from the appetitive, imaginative, and sense-perceptive [souls], it is given existence by something apart from it. It is likely that what is attained from it for something else is only so that it increases in more perfect existence by what it does. When it is separated from its instrument, it can have no effect on anything else and remains limited to its own existence. For it is likely that its substance is not such that existence would emanate from it to anything else. Rather, its dose of existence is for it to continue to preserve existence by means of its substance. And with respect to the causes, it comes to be a cause in that it is an end, not in that it is an agent.

## [2. THE FIRST CAUSE]

20. There is no defect at all in the first [cause], not in any way. Nor is it possible for there to be an existence more perfect and more excellent than its existence. Nor is it possible for there to be an existence prior to it or in the same rank [43] as its existence that it does not surpass. Therefore it is not possible it would have procured its existence from something other than it that is prior to it; and it is even more remote that it would have procured that from what is more defective than it. Therefore, it is in its substance likewise completely distinct from anything else.

It is not possible for its existence to belong to more than one. For, with anything having this existence, it is not possible that there be any distinction between it and another also having this very same existence. If there were a distinction between the two, what makes them distinct from one another would be something other than what they both share in. Thus the thing by which each is made distinct from the other would be a part constituting the existence of both, and the existence of each of them would be divisible in speech. So each of its two parts would be a cause for its essence being constituted, and it would not be first. Rather, there would then be an existent prior to it by which it is constituted. And that is absurd, since it is first. As long as there is no distinction between the two of them, it is not possible for them to be many—not as two nor as more [than two].

21. Moreover, if it were possible for there to be something else that has this very existence, it would be possible for there to be an existence external to its existence that it does not surpass and that is in the same rank. Therefore, its existence would be beneath the existence of what brings the two existences together, and its existence would then have a defect. For

when something is complete, nothing exists external to it that it can have. Therefore, it is not possible that its existence be external to its essence for anything whatever. Thus, it is not at all possible for it to have a contrary, because the contrary of a thing exists in the same rank as it does. Nor is it possible for there to be any existence at all in its same rank that it does not surpass, lest its existence be a defective existence. [44]

22. Moreover, the existence of whatever has a contrary becomes perfect by its contrary ceasing to exist. That is because a thing having a contrary exists along with its contrary in that they are preserved by external things—things external to their essence and substance. For the substance of neither one of the two contraries suffices to preserve its essence from its contrary. Therefore, it would result that the first must have some other cause for its existence. Thus it is not possible for there to be a contrary in its ranking. Rather, it is alone, unique. So it is one in this respect.

23. Moreover, in its essence it is not divisible in speech; I mean, it is not divided into things that make it substantial. That is because it is not possible for each of the parts of the statement explaining its essence to denote a part of what makes it substantial. Were it so, the parts making it substantial would be causes of its existence in the way the meanings referred to by the parts of the definition are causes of the defined thing's existence and in the way material and form are causes of the existence of what is constituted by them. That is not possible for it, since it is first. If it does not admit of this kind of division, then its being divided according to quantity or the rest of the modes of division is [even] more remote. So in this other respect as well, it is one.

Therefore, it is also not possible that the existence by which it is set apart from the rest of the existents be other than that by which it exists in its essence. So its being set apart from all else by unity is, therefore, its essence. For one of the meanings of unity is [45] the particularly characteristic existence by which every existent is set apart from all else. It is that by which each existent is said to be "one" insofar as it is particularly characterized as being so. So the first is one in this way also and is more deserving of the name "one" and its meaning than any one other than it.

Because it has no material, not in any way, it is an intellect by its substance. For it is material that prevents a thing from being an intellect and from intellecting in actuality. And it is an intelligible insofar as it is an intellect. For that of it which is intellect is an intelligible for that of it

which is intellect.<sup>13</sup> To be an intelligible, it does not need another external essence to intellect it. Rather, it intellects its essence itself. Through what it intellects of its essence, it becomes something that intellects and, in that its essence intellects it, an intelligible. Likewise, to be an intellect and something that intellects, it does not need to procure another essence and another thing from outside. Rather, it comes to be an intellect and something that intellects by intellecting its essence. For the essence that intellects is the one that is intellected.

24. The case is similar with respect to it knowing. To know, it does not need another essence through knowledge of which it procures a virtue external to its essence; nor, to be known, [does it need] another essence that knows it. Rather, in its substance it suffices for knowing and being known. Its knowledge of its essence is nothing other than its substance. That it knows, is known, and is knowledge are one essence and one substance.

25. It is similar with respect to it being wise. Wisdom is to intellect the most excellent things by the most excellent knowledge. By what [46] it intellects and knows of its essence, it knows the most excellent things by the most excellent knowledge. The most excellent knowledge is complete knowledge that does not cease when it concerns what always is without ceasing. Therefore, it is wise not due to a wisdom it procures through knowledge of something else external to its essence; rather, for it to become wise, it suffices that it knows its essence.

26. Beauty, splendor, and radiance in each existent is for its existence to be most excellent and to reach its final perfection. Since the most excellent existence is that of the first, its beauty thus surpasses the beauty of every beautiful thing. Similarly, its radiance, splendor, and beauty belong to it due to its substance and essence—that is, in itself and due to what it intellects of its essence. More pleasure, joy, gladness, and delight follow and are attained by what is most beautiful being apprehended by the most certain

13. This apparently circular statement reiterates the point made above in sec. 8, end. As Najjar suggests by his editing, no greater clarity is gained by replacing the clause *alladhī huwa minh 'aql* ("that of it which is intellect") with the clause *alladhī huwayyatuh 'aql* ("that whose identity is intellect"), from the nearly identical passage in Alfarabi's *Mabādī 'Arā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila* (*Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*) per Richard Walzer's edition and translation, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 70:6–7.

apprehension. And it is unqualifiedly the most beautiful, most splendid, and most radiant; and its apprehension of its essence is the most certain apprehension and the most excellent knowledge. Thus, the pleasure the first [cause] has is a pleasure whose core we ourselves do not understand and whose great extent we do not recognize except by analogy and in relation to the trifling pleasure we ourselves find when we presume that we have apprehended what for us is more beautiful and more splendid by means of a more certain apprehension—either by sense-perception, imagination, or intellectual knowledge. If in this state we ourselves have attained a pleasure we presume surpasses every pleasure in greatness and we are ourselves in utter delight by what we gain of that, then the analogy between its knowledge and apprehension of what is more excellent and more beautiful and our own knowledge and apprehension of what is more beautiful and more splendid is the analogy between its gladness, [47] pleasure, and delight in itself and what we ourselves gain from that of pleasure, gladness, and delight in ourselves.

There is no link between our own apprehension and its apprehension, nor between our knowledge and its knowledge. And if there is a link, it is a trifling link. Therefore, there is no link between our pleasure, gladness, and delight in ourselves and what the first has of that. Or if there is a link, it is a very trifling link. How is there to be a link between what is a trifling part and what has an extent in time that is unlimited or between what has many defects and what is utterly perfect? If what takes more pleasure in its essence, is gladdened by it, and delights in it with a greater delight, loves its essence, and is more passionate about it, then it is evident that the first [cause] is necessarily passionate about its essence, loves it, and marvels at it with a passion and marvel whose link to our passion in being pleased with the virtue of our essence is like the link of its own virtue and perfection of its essence to our own virtue and perfection at which we ourselves marvel. That of it that loves is itself the beloved, and that of it that marvels is itself the marveled at; for it is the primary beloved and the primary object of passion.

27. When the existence belonging to the first [cause] exists, it necessarily results that the rest of the natural existents not dependent on human choice exist from it according to the way they exist—that is, some observed by means of sense-perception and some known by means of demonstration. What exists from the first cause is in the manner of an emanation of its existence to the existence of another thing and as the existence of



something else emanating from its existence. In this way, the existence of what exists from it [48] is not in any way a cause of it, not as being the end for its existence nor as providing it a particular perfection—as occurs with most of the things that come about from us. For we are disposed so that many of those things come about from us. Those things are the ends for the sake of which we exist, and many of those ends provide us with a perfection we did not have.

28. The purpose of the existence of the first [cause] is not the existence of the rest of the things so that they are the ends of its existence and there is for its existence another cause external to it. Nor in its giving existence does it gain another perfection external to what it has or gain the perfection of its essence the way that is gained by someone who is generous with his money or something else and procures pleasure, honor, rulership, or some other thing from among the goods and perfections by what he spends so that the existence of something else comes to be the cause of his attaining a good and an existence he did not have. All of these things are absurd with respect to the first [cause], because they would eliminate its primacy and necessitate something other than it being prior and being a cause of its existence. Rather, it exists for its own sake;<sup>14</sup> that something else exists from it attaches to, and follows from, its substance.

Therefore, that existence emanates from its existence to something else is in its substance; and the existence by which it becomes substantiated in its essence is the very existence by which something else attains existence from it. It is not divided into two things so that by one of them its essence becomes substantiated and by the other something else is attained from it. Nor does it need something other than its essence and substance for the existence of something else to emanate from its existence, the way we and many other of the existents that act [on others] need that. Nor is its existence by which existence emanates from it to something else more perfect than its existence by which it becomes substantial. Therefore the existence of what exists from it does not become subsequent to it in time at all; rather, it is subsequent to it only in all the rest of the modes of being subsequent. [49]

14. Or “for the sake of its essence” (*li-ajl dhatih*).

29. The names by which it ought to be called are the names that signify perfection and excellence of existence for the existents around us. Yet nothing in those names should signify that it is of the perfection and excellence those names customarily signify with respect to the existents around us, but rather of the perfection that particularly characterizes it in its substance. Moreover, the kinds of perfections that are customarily signified by the many names are many. And it ought not to be presumed that the kinds of its perfections signified by its many names are many kinds into which it is divided and by all of which it is made substantial. Rather, those many names ought to signify a single substance and a single existence that is not at all divided. Moreover, when it chances to happen that, with respect to one [of the existents] around us, one of those names signifies an excellence and perfection external to its substance, what that name signifies with respect to the first ought to be established as a perfection and excellence in its substance. An example is “beautiful,” which, with respect to many of the existents, signifies a perfection in color, shape, or position, not in the substance of that thing.

30. Of the names that signify perfection and excellence in the things around us, some signify what it is in its essence and not insofar as it is related to another thing—like being, oneness, and what is similar to that. Others signify what it is in relation to something else external to it—like justice and generosity. With respect to what is around us, these latter names signify only an excellence and a perfection of a part of its essence—that is, the relation it has to something external—whereby that relation comes to be a part of the sum of what [50] that name signifies, and excellence and perfection come to be constituted insofar as they are related to something else. When examples of these names are transferred and the first is called by them and it is intended that they signify the relation it has to something else due to the existence emanating from it, the relation ought not to be established as a part of its perfection signified by that name nor its perfection as constituted by that relation. Rather, that name ought to be established as signifying its substance and its perfection. Let the relation be established as following upon and attached to that perfection and that relation as constituted by its substance and by that perfection it has. And let that relation be established as necessarily following upon and attached to that whose substance was mentioned.

31. Of the names the first shares with other things, some are common to all of the existents and some are shared with some of the existents. From

many of the names it shares with something else, it becomes evident that that name signifies its own perfection first, then that of something else second—according to its ranking in existence with respect to the first, like the name “existent” and the name “one.” For these two first of all signify only what makes the first substantial; then they signify the rest of the things insofar as they are made substantial from the first and are secured and procured from it.

32. When many of the shared names that signify the substance of the first and its existence also signify [51] something else, they signify only the similarity—great or trifling—imagined with respect to the existence of the first.<sup>15</sup> Now these names are said with respect to the first in the most prior and most deserving ways and are said with respect to something else in subsequent ways. It is not impossible for our calling the first by these names to be subsequent in time to our calling something else by them. For it is evident that we call the first by many of them as a way of relating it to something else and after our having called something else by it for a particular time. Now it is not impossible for what is prior by nature and in existence to be subsequent in time without any defect attaching to that priority.

33. We have many names to signify generally accepted perfections around us. And we use many of them only to signify those perfections insofar as they are perfections, not insofar as they are those kinds of perfections. So it is evident that for the most excellent of the perfections, than which there is no more excellent perfection, that name is necessarily more appropriate. Whenever we ourselves notice a more complete perfection among the existents, we establish it as more deserving of that name until we ascend to knowledge of<sup>16</sup> what is at the terminal point of perfection and establish it as that name by which the first [cause] is naturally called.

Then we establish the rest of the existents whose state with respect to that name is that of their rankings with respect to the first [cause]—like “existent,” for example, and “one.” Some of them signify one kind of perfection and not another. Among these kinds is what, with respect to the substance of the first [cause], pertains to the most excellent modes that kind can have raised in fancy up to the most lofty levels of that kind’s

15. Reading *fi wujud al-awwal* for sense, rather than *fi al-wujud al-awwal* (“in the first existence”) with Najjar and all the mss.

16. Adding *ila* with Feyzullah 1265.

perfection until there remains no manner of defect at all—like “knowledge,” for example, “intellect,” [52] and “wisdom.” With examples like these, it necessarily results that the name of that kind is most appropriate and most deserved.

When a kind of perfection connected to a particular defect and vile-ness in existence is then isolated from what it is connected to, its substance passes away completely. So it [the first cause] ought not to be called by that kind of perfection. If that is so, then it is even more removed from being called by names that signify vileness of existence.

[3. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE SECONDARY CAUSES, THE ACTIVE INTELLECT, AND THE FIRST CAUSE]

34. Then, after the first [cause], there exist the secondary [causes] and the active intellect. The secondary [causes] have rankings in existence. However, each of them also has a particular existence by which it is made substantial in its essence. And the existence that is particularly characteristic of it is the very existence from which existence emanates to something else. For something else to come to exist from them and for existence to emanate to something else from their existence, they do not need things external to their essences. They all secure existence from the first [cause].

Each of them intellects the first [cause] and intellects its [own] essence. Yet none of them suffices in its essence for being delighted with its essence alone. Rather, it comes to be delighted in itself through intellecting the first [cause] in addition to intellecting its essence. The superiority of the first [cause] over the excellence of its [the secondary cause’s] essence is proportionate to the superiority of its delight in itself through intellecting the first [cause] over its delight in itself through intellecting its essence. Similarly, the analogy between its [the secondary cause’s] pleasure in its essence through intellecting the first [cause] and its pleasure in its essence through intellecting its essence is proportionate to the increased excellence of the first [cause] over the excellence of its [the secondary cause’s] essence. The same holds for its marveling at its essence and its passion for its essence. So what is first beloved and first marveled at in its soul is what it intellects of the first [cause] and, second, what it intellects of its essence. The first [cause], then, according to its relation to these as well, is the primary beloved and the primary object of passion. [53]

35. Therefore, all of these are divided in various ways. The perfection and defect in each of them and what each ought to be called are easy [to discern] according to this example—namely, by our comparing it<sup>17</sup> with what is said of the first [cause]. Each of these secondary [causes] was completely accorded its full existence at the outset; and there remained no existence that it might become in the future lest it strive toward something other than what it was given at the outset. Therefore they neither move nor strive toward anything at all, but from the existence of each of them the existence of each single heaven emanates. From the first of them there results the existence of the first heaven [and so on] until it terminates at the last heaven in which is the moon. The substance of each of the heavens is composed of two things: a subject and a soul. While the soul that is in each of them exists in a subject, it is also the parts of the soul that is actual intellect in that it intellects its essence, intellects the secondary [cause] from which it has its existence, and intellects the first [cause].

### [C. Particulars Concerning the Corporeal Substances and Existence in General]

#### [1. BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HEAVENLY BODIES AND THE NONHEAVENLY BODIES]

36. The substances of the heavenly bodies are divided into many things insofar as they are substances. With respect to the rankings of the existents, they are in the first rankings of defectiveness due to the thing that makes them substantial in actuality needing a particular subject.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, they resemble the substances composed of material and form. In addition, their substances do not suffice for bringing about another thing. And no action upon something else manages to emanate from their perfection and excellence unless it gets them another existence external to their substances and to the things that make them substantial.

External to what makes an existing thing substantial is quantity, quality, [54] or some other category. Therefore every one of these substances

17. Reading *bi-iqtiyāsina lah* for sense, rather than *bi-iqtiḃāsina lah* (“by our acquiring it”) with Najjar and all the mss.

18. Namely, the soul; see above, secs. 4 and 6. In saying that “the substances of the heavenly bodies . . . are in the first rankings of defectiveness,” Alfarabi means they are the least defective as the subsequent exposition makes clear.

possesses defined magnitudes and shapes, other defined qualities, and the rest of the categories that necessarily follow these.

However, each comes to have only what is most excellent of all that. And it follows that they come to be in the most excellent place, since it necessarily results that each defined body is in a defined place. Moreover, these substances were completely accorded most of their existence; and there remained something trifling not such as to be fully accorded them all at once from the outset, but only such that it exists as theirs in the future gradually and continuously. Therefore, they strive to gain it and do gain it only by continuous motion. Thus, they move continuously and do not interrupt their motion. They move and strive so as to [reach] their finest existence. What is most venerable in their existence and closest to what is most venerable was accorded them from the outset. And the subject of each of them is able to accept no form other than the form it attained at the outset. In addition, their substances have no contraries.

37. The existents beneath the heavenly bodies are at the terminal point of defectiveness with respect to existence. That is because at the outset they were not given everything by which they are made completely substantial. Rather, they were given only their substances in remote potentiality, not in actuality. For they were given only their primary material. Therefore, they are always striving toward the form by which they are made substantial. And primary material is potentially all of the substances that are beneath the heavens. Insofar as they are potentially substances, they move so as to attain substance in actuality. Then—due to their posteriority, backwardness, and vile existence—it obtains that they are unable in and of themselves to be aroused and to strive toward becoming perfected except by an external mover. Their external mover is the [55] heavenly body and its parts, then the active intellect. For both of these perfect the existence of the things that are beneath the heavenly body.

38. Such is the substance, nature, and action of the heavenly body that from it results first of all the existence of primary material. Then, after that, it gives primary material all that is in its nature, possibility, and disposition to accept from the forms, whatever they may be.

By its nature and substance, the active intellect is prepared to look into everything the heavenly body makes ready and gives. Thus it wants to make whatever accepts transcendence and separation from material in some particular way transcend material and privation so that it will come

to be in a ranking closer to it. That is, so that potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles and an intellect that was a potential intellect thereby gets to be an actual intellect. It is not possible for anything other than a human being to come to be like that. So this is the ultimate happiness that is the most excellent perfection it is possible for a human being to obtain.

Through these two<sup>19</sup> is perfected the existence of the things that remain subsequent and that—to be drawn out into existence—need the modes such as to draw them out into existence and the modes such as to continue their existence.

[2. HOW ACCIDENTAL CONTRARIES ARISE AMONG  
THE HEAVENLY BODIES]

39. The heavenly bodies are many, and they move in many sorts of circular motions around the earth. The power<sup>20</sup> of the first heaven, which is one, attaches to all of them. Therefore, they all move with the motion of the first heaven. And they have other powers that make them distinct and in which their motions are different. So, from the power in which the whole of the heavenly body shares, there results the existence of primary material common to everything beneath the heavens. And from the things that make them distinct, there results the existence of the many different forms in primary material.

Then, attached to the heavenly bodies, due to some having different positions from others and different positions from the earth, is that [56] they are close to a thing at times and far from it at times, they come together at times and separate at times, they appear at times and are veiled at times, and they happen to accelerate at times and to slow down at times. These are contraries that are not in their substances, but in the relations of some to others, in their relations to the earth, or in their relations to both.

40. From these contraries that necessarily attach to their relations, contrary forms arise in primary material and contrary accidents and contrary changes in the bodies beneath the heavenly body. So this is the first cause for the contraries existing in primary material and in the bodies that are beneath the heavens. That is because contrary things exist in material either from contrary things or from a single thing that has no contrary

19. Namely, the heavenly body and the active intellect.

20. This is the same term, *quwwa*, that has been translated heretofore as “faculty” and “potential.”

in its essence and substance, yet—due to material—has contrary states and links. In their essences, the heavenly bodies are not contrary; but their links to primary material are contrary links and, due to it, they have contrary states. So it is through primary material and the contrary forms inevitably existing in it that possibly existent things are joined together.

### [3. POSSIBLE EXISTENCE]

41. Possible existents are the subsequent existents that are most defective in existence and are a mixture of existence and nonexistence. That is because between what cannot not exist and what cannot exist, these two being extremes very remote from one another, there is something to which the contradictory of each of these two extremes applies—namely, what can exist and can not exist. This is a mixture of existence and nonexistence, and it is the existence to which privation is opposed and also connected. For privation is the nonexistence of what can exist. [57]

42. Since the existence of the possible is one of the two modes of the existent, and possible existence is one of the two modes of existence, the first cause—whose existence is in its substance—does not emanate existence only to what cannot not exist; rather, it emanates existence to what can not exist, so that there remains no mode of existence it has not given.

It is not in the nature of the possible for it to have a definite single existence; rather, it is possible for it to exist thus and for it not to exist, and it is possible for it to exist as one thing and for it to exist as its opposite. Its state with respect to the two opposite existences is the same. It is not more appropriate for it to exist as this existence than for it to exist as its opposite.

And opposite here is either privation, contrary, or both. Thus it results that opposite existents exist. Indeed, it is possible for opposite existents to exist in one of three ways: either at two moments [of time]; at one moment, but in two different ways; or as being two things, each of which exists as an opposite of the other. Yet for a single thing to have two opposed existences is possible only in two ways: either at two moments or in two different ways.

43. Opposite existents come to be only through contrary forms. When something attains one of the two contraries, that is its definite existence. What makes it possible for it to exist according to two contrary existences is material. So through material the existence it comes to have is indefinite,



whereas through form its existence comes to be definite. Thus, it has two existences: a definite existence through one thing and an indefinite existence through another thing. Therefore, its existence by dint of<sup>21</sup> its material is at one time to be like this and at another time like that; whereas by dint of its form, it exists like this, alone, without its opposite. Thus, it necessarily results that both existences are given—that is, at one moment according to this and at another moment according to its opposite. [58]

#### [4. THE ROLE OF FORM AND MATERIAL IN POSSIBLE EXISTENCE]

44. The possible is in two ways: one is what can possibly exist as a particular thing and not exist as that thing, and this is material. The second is what can possibly exist and not exist as it is in its essence, and this is what is composed of material and form.

Possible existents have rankings. The lowest in ranking is what has no definite existence, not in either one of the two contraries—and that is primary material. The ones in the second ranking are what attain existence through the contraries they attain in primary material—namely, the elements. When these come to be an existent through particular forms, through attaining the forms they attain the possibility that other opposite existents<sup>22</sup> also come to exist. They thus become material for other forms so that when they also attain those forms, there arises for them through the secondary forms the possibility that other opposite existents also come to exist through other contrary forms. Thus those also become material for other forms so that when they also attain those [forms], there arises for them through those forms the possibility that other opposite existents also come to exist. They thus become material for [yet] other forms. And they go on like this until they terminate at forms such that the existents attained through them cannot be material for other forms. Thus, the forms of those existents are forms for every form preceding them. These final ones are the most venerable of the possible existents. And primary material is the vilest of the possible existents.

45. The ones intermediate between these two are also in rankings; and whatever is closer to primary material is more vile, while whatever is

21. Or, more literally here and in the next clause, “by right of” (*bi-ḥaqq*). See sec. 46, below.

22. Reading *maʾwjudāt* here and in the next two sentences for sense, rather than *wujūdāt* (“existences”) with Najjar and all the mss.

closer to the form of forms is more venerable. So the existence of primary material is [such] that it is [59] always for something else and has no existence at all for its own sake. Therefore, if that for whose sake it is created were not to exist, it would not exist either. Thus if one of these forms were not to exist, it would not exist either. Therefore, it is not possible for primary material to exist separate from a form at any moment at all. Now the existents whose form is the form of forms are always for their own sake. It is not possible that through their forms they be created for the sake of something else—I mean, that through them something else be made substantial and that they be materials for something else.

46. The ones that are intermediate may be created for their own sake, and they may be created for the sake of something else. Again, each of them has a right and a merit through its material and a right and merit through its form. The right it has through its material is to exist as another thing opposite the existence it has, and the right it has through its form is to remain existing as it is unceasingly. Now since there are two contrary merits, justice is that each be accorded its portion. So it exists as a particular thing for a moment, then perishes. And it exists as something contrary to the first existence; then that, too, survives for a moment, then perishes. And another thing contrary to the first exists, and so on perpetually.<sup>23</sup>

47. Moreover, the material of each of these contrary existents is the material of its opposite. So each of them has something the other one has, and the other one has something it has. For their primary materials are shared. So it is as though in this respect each has a particular right with respect to each other one that ought to come to each [60] one from each other one. Justice regarding that is evident, namely, that what exists for each ought to be for the other one and they both be accorded it.

48. Possible existents do not of themselves suffice for striving on their own for the existences that remain, for they were given only primary material. Nor, when they attain an existence, do they suffice to preserve their existence by themselves. Nor, moreover, when they have a portion of existence belonging to their contrary, is it possible for them to strive by themselves to exhaust it thoroughly. Thus it results necessarily that each of them has

23. See Aristotle, *Meteorology* 4.1.378b10–379b9; unlike Aristotle, Alfarabi utilizes political terminology here and in the sequel—“right,” “merit,” and “justice”—to talk about the natural processes of coming into being and passing away.

an external agent that moves and arouses it toward what is its own and to what preserves for it what it has attained of existence. The first agent that moves them toward their forms and preserves these for them when they attain them is the heavenly body and its parts.

49. It does that in [various] ways. One is to move some one of them, without an intermediate or instrument, to the form by which it has existence. Another is to give material a faculty by which it arouses itself on its own and moves toward the form by which it has existence. Another is that it gives a particular thing a faculty by which that thing moves some other thing to the form by which that other thing has existence. And another is that it gives a particular thing a faculty by which that thing gives another thing a faculty by which that other [thing] moves a particular material to the form that is such as to exist in material. In this [case], it will have moved material by the intermediary of two things. Likewise, its moving of material will have been by the intermediary of three or more things according to this ranking.

50. Similarly, it also gives each one what preserves its existence, either by establishing with the form by which it [61] has its existence another faculty or by establishing in another, external body what preserves its existence such that it preserves its existence by preserving for it that other body established for it. That other [body] is the servant of this one in preserving its existence. It preserves its existence either through the service one body gives it or by the mutual assistance of many bodies so disposed as to preserve its existence. In addition, to many of the bodies are connected other faculties by which they act upon similar [kinds of] materials by giving them forms similar to the forms they have.

51. Sometimes when the agent encounters these materials, they have contraries of the forms toward which its wont is to move them. Then it needs another faculty by which to make those contrary forms cease. Since it is likewise not impossible for something else to act upon it in the same way as it acts upon something else and to seek to nullify it just as it seeks to nullify something else, it results that these materials will have another faculty to combat the contrary that seeks to nullify its existence.

That by which it nullifies something else and strips it of the form by which it has its existence may be a faculty in its essence connected to the form by which it has its existence. And sometimes that faculty is in

another body external to its essence. So the latter is either an instrument or something serving it for extracting the material disposed to it from the contraries of that body. An example of that is vipers. For this species is an instrument of the elements or their servant in that it extracts the materials of the elements from the rest of the animals. Similarly, the faculty by which it [the agent] makes something similar to itself in species from materials may be connected with its form in a single body, and it may be in another body external to its essence—like sperm in the male animal, for it is an instrument for it.

These faculties are also forms in the bodies that have these faculties. Things like these are for other things—I mean, they are created so as to be [62] instruments or things serving other things. When these instruments are connected to forms in a single body, they are nonseparated instruments. And when they are in other bodies, they are separated instruments.

52. Each of these [possible] existents has a merit by dint of<sup>24</sup> its material and a merit by dint of its form. What it merits through its material is that it exist contrary to the way it does. What it merits through its form is that it exist as it does either [a] for itself alone, or [b] that its existence by dint of its form be for the sake of something else, or [c] that its merit by dint of its form be that something else come to be for it—I mean, that there be another thing created for its sake—or [d] that it have one species in which both objects are brought together—that is, that it be for itself and that it be for something else. So in it there would be something existing for itself and something used for the sake of something else. What is for the sake of something else by dint of its form is either material for it, an instrument, or something serving it. When something else is created for its sake, what is created for its sake is either to be a material for it, an instrument, or something serving it.

[5. HOW THE DIFFERENT REALMS OF BEING COME INTO EXISTENCE  
AND ASSIST ONE ANOTHER]

53. From the heavenly bodies and the difference in their movements, the elements are first attained, then the stony bodies, then plants, then the nonrational animals, then the rational animal. Individuals of each species

24. Here and in the rest of this section, “by dint of” would be more literally translated as “by right of” (*bi-haqq*).

with innumerable kinds of faculties arise. Then the faculties established in each species no longer suffice for effecting or preserving their existence without the heavenly bodies also coming to assist some of them against others and to impede the action of some upon others by their [different] sorts of motions—changing with one another or succeeding one another. So when they assist this one against its contrary at a particular moment, they impede it at another moment and assist its contrary [63] against it. That is, for example, by increasing heat or cold or decreasing it for those [bodies] such as to act and be acted upon by heat or cold; for they increase it at times and decrease it at times.

Due to their sharing in primary material and in many of the proximate materials and because some of their forms are similar and some forms contrary, there are [other heavenly] bodies below them. Some of them assist others and some impede others—either frequently, rarely, or usually, according to how similar or contrary their forms are. For what is contrary impedes and what is similar assists.

These actions are interwoven in the possible existents and made consonant so that many mixes are attained from them. However, in coming together, they proceed in keeping with a consonance, balance, and measure by which every one of the existents attains the portion of existence allotted to it by nature either according to its material, form, or both.

54. What is according to its form is either for itself, for something else, or for both of them. So according to its form, the rational animal is not for the sake of any other species at all—not by way of material, nor by way of being an instrument or of serving. Every one of them beneath it,<sup>25</sup> by dint of its form, is either only for something else or brings both of them together: existing for itself and existing for something else. Justice is for both its portions to be accorded by nature. Now all of these things happen usually, frequently, or rarely. For a thing to come about rarely is a necessary consequence of its possible nature, and there is nothing [64] strange in it. In this respect and in this way, the possible existents are controlled and governed, and justice proceeds with respect to them so that each possible [existent] attains its portion of existence according to its merit.

25. Reading *dūnah* with Feyzullah 1279, rather than *dūnahā* (“beneath them”) with Najjar and the other mss. The “by dint of” immediately following would be more literally translated as “by right of” (*bi-ḥaqq*).

Sometimes, after the things having faculties that effect or preserve [their own existence] have attained these faculties, the heavenly bodies act upon them in ways contrary to their faculties; and they are unable to receive them. Similarly, they are unable to receive the effect of one on another and are too weak for one or the other. The possible things having effective faculties may not be able to be effective, either because of their weakness, because of their contraries making it impossible for them, because of the power of their contraries, because their contraries are assisted by external things similar to them, or because another impediment, contrary in some other respect, impedes the agent from having an effect.

55. Thus it may be possible that the heavenly bodies do not act and do not have an effect on the subjects beneath them. [That is] due not to a weariness within them, but to their subjects not being able to receive their actions or there being another agent from among the possible things that assists their subjects and strengthens them.<sup>26</sup> For since possible things were given their faculties at the outset and left free to act upon one another, it is possible for them to counter the actions of the heavenly bodies or to produce similar ones. And, after giving them those faculties, the heavenly bodies come to aid or impede them.

56. Some of these possible bodies existing by nature exist for their own sake and are not used for another thing nor so that a particular action originates from them. Some are disposed so that a particular action originates from them, either with respect to themselves or with respect to something else. And some are disposed to accept the action of something else.

With what is created for its own sake and not at all for the sake of another [65] thing, a particular action may originate from it in the manner of an emanation of its existence to the existence of something else.

With all of these, when they are in a state of existence such that something tending to come forth from them does come forth without any impediment from them, that state of their existence is their final perfection. That is like the state of vision when it is viewing. When they are in a state of existence such that of itself there does not come forth what tends to come forth from them without their being transferred to a better

26. That is, strengthens the subjects so that they resist these actions and thus do not receive them.

existence than they now have, that state is their first perfection. That is like the link, with respect to writing, between the state of the sleeping scribe and his state when he is alert or like his state with respect to it when he is wearied and resting from weariness and his state when he is writing. When something is in its final perfection and what tends to originate from it is an action, that action will not be postponed and will be attained forthwith in no time. The action of what is at its final perfection will be postponed only by an impediment external to itself. That is like the light of the sun being impeded [from shining] on something covered by a wall.

Things separated from material are in their final perfections from the outset through their substances. None of them is divided into two states: a state in which it is in its first perfection and a state in which it is in its final perfection. Because neither they nor their subjects have any contraries, there is nothing to impede them in any way at all. Therefore, their actions are not postponed.

57. The heavenly bodies are in their final perfections through their substances. The action first coming forth from them is the attainment of their magnitudes, dimensions, shapes, and the rest of what they have that is immutable. The action coming forth from them second is their movements, and this is an action [coming] from their final perfections. There is nothing contrary in them, nor do they have contraries from outside. Therefore, their movement is not interrupted, not at any moment at all. [66]

58. Possible bodies are at times in their first perfection and at times in their final perfection. Because each of them has a contrary, their actions come to be postponed due to both of these causes or due to one of them. For an act [of writing] does not originate from the scribe because he is either sleeping or occupied with another thing, because the parts of writing are not ready to mind at that moment, or because all of these are complete but he has some external impediment. What is intended by the existence of all of these is that they be for the final perfections. A thing comes to have its first perfection by nature and not by coercion only so as to attain its final perfection—either because first perfection is a way to final perfection or because first perfection is something assisting final perfection,<sup>27</sup> as sleep and rest for an animal weary from action give it back strength for action.

27. Literally, "because it is a way to it or because it is something assisting it" (*li-annah tartiq ilaih wa imma li-annah mu'tim 'alaih*).

59. Then, due to their defect, the substances of these [possible bodies] also end up becoming insufficient for attaining their perfections without there existing other existences external to their substances from among the rest of the other categories. That is, by their [the possible bodies] having magnitudes, shapes, positions, and the rest of the categories like hardness, softness, heat, cold, and other things from among the rest of the categories. With many of the species of these bodies, the individuals within each species are constituted from similar parts. And their shapes are unlimited, like the elements and minerals. Yet their shapes are according only to the chance action of their agent or to the shapes of the things surrounding them.

Similarly, the dimensions of their magnitudes are unlimited, except that they are not infinite in magnitude. At times their parts come together, and at times they separate. With some of them, when they are together in a single place, they are joined. And with some, when they are together, they only touch and are not joined. Their disjunction and conjunction is not according to a limited arrangement, but occurs by chance depending on the agent bringing them together and separating them. Therefore, the individuals beneath each of their species are not necessarily isolated from one another. Rather, that occurs with them by [67] chance, because they attain perfection even if these accidents occur in them in any chance way. So these things occur in them as what is equally possible.

60. The individuals beneath each species of plants and animals are naturally isolated from one another and are made unique by an existence that belongs to no other. Therefore, their individuals have a number by nature. Each of them is composed of dissimilar parts limited in number, and each of its parts is limited in magnitude, shape, quality, position, and ranking. The genera of possible things have rankings in existence as we have said.

So the lowest among them assists the highest in [bringing] possible existence to each of them. The elements assist the rest of them in all of their parts by the three means: material, service, and instruments. Minerals assist, but not every one of the remaining species nor by every manner of help. They assist one species by material, another species by service—as do mountains in bringing forth water gushing from springs—and another species by being an instrument. The species of plants may assist animals by these three means. Similarly, the nonrational animals assist the rational animal by these three ways. For some assist it by material, some by service, and some by being an instrument.



61. Since there is no other genus from among the possible [bodies] more excellent than the rational animal, it does not [68] assist anything more excellent than it by any of the means. That is, by means of reason it is not material for anything at all—not for what is above it nor for what is below it. Nor is it an instrument for any other thing at all; nor does it by nature serve anything else at all.

The assistance it offers some possible [bodies] other than it insofar as it is rational is by reason and will, not by nature. We will put off mentioning it now. For sometimes, by means of reason, it carries out actions that are accidentally of service to many of the natural things—like channeling water, planting trees, sowing seeds, breeding and herding animals, and similar things.

By nature, it serves no species other than its own in any way. Moreover, it has nothing by which to serve any other species nor anything at all by which to be an instrument for another species. The assistance the most venerable genus offers the lower genera of possible things is as we have said. So no rational animal serves or assists any of the lower species at all, and that is due to its form.

This ought to be understood as what we hold with respect to the assistance some species offer others.

62. Nonrational animals, insofar as they are animals, are not at all material for anything more defective than they. For none of them is by its form material for the plants. Yet in the way of service or of [being] an instrument, it is not impossible. Indeed, some animals are created by nature to serve the elements by dissolving things distant from them into the elements. For example, poisonous animals naturally hostile to the rest of the species of animals that act hostilely to the rest of the species of animals: vipers, for example, serve the elements by means of their poison by dissolving the species of animals into them. The poisons in plants are like that, yet these are sometimes poisons relatively. For that species serves two things. It ought to be known that predatory animals are not like vipers. Vipers do not have poison in order to improve their nutrition by means of the rest of the animals. Rather, they act hostilely [69] by nature toward all species of animals and are intent on nullifying them. Predators ravish not out of natural hostility, but in searching for nutrition. Vipers are not like that. Minerals as minerals are not material for the elements, but assist them by way of [being] an instrument—like the mountains in bringing forth water.

63. Some species of animals and plants are able to gain their necessary affairs only by a group of individual members coming together with one another in an association. With others, each one obtains what is necessary even if isolated from one another. But it obtains its most excellent state only by individual members coming together with one another. With others, each of the individuals has completed all of its necessary and most excellent affairs, even when isolated from one another; yet, when they do come together, one does not impede another with respect to anything belonging to the other. With others, when they come together, one impedes another with respect to the necessary or most excellent affairs. Therefore, the individuals of some species always isolate themselves from one another with respect to all of their affairs, even procreation, as with many of the sea animals. And some of them do not isolate themselves from one another except for procreation. Others do not isolate themselves from one another for most of what goes on—like the ant and the bee and many others besides these two, such as birds that feed and fly in flocks.

## [Part 2: The Political World]

### [A. The Divisions of Human Associations]

#### [1. PERFECT AND DEFECTIVE ASSOCIATIONS]

64. Human beings are [one] of the species that cannot complete their necessary affairs nor gain their most excellent state except by coming together as many associations in a single dwelling-place. Some human associations are large, some medium, and some small. The large association is an association of many nations coming together and helping one another. The medium is the nation. And the small are those the city embraces. These three are the perfect associations.

Thus the city is first in the rankings of perfections. Associations in villages, quarters, streets, and houses are defective associations. Of these, one is very defective, namely, the household association. It is part [70] of the association in the street, and the association in the street is part of the association in the quarter. And this latter association is part of the civic association.<sup>28</sup> The associations in quarters and the associations in villages

28. Or, with equal right, "part of the political association" (*juz' li-al-ijtima' al-madani*). As the exposition has developed thus far in this section, Alfarabi is pointing to the size of the association. Thus, while the Arabic word *madani* ("civic" or "political") derives from *madina* ("city") and thus reflects the Greek word for city (*polis*), "civic" seems to convey the sense of the argument better than "political."

are both for the sake of the city. However, the difference between them is that quarters are parts of the city, while villages serve the city. The civic association is part of the nation, and the nation is divided into cities. The unqualifiedly perfect human association is divided into nations.

## [2. HOW NATIONS ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM ONE ANOTHER]

65. One nation is distinguished from another by two natural things—natural temperaments and natural states of character—and by a third, conventional, thing having some basis in natural things, namely, the tongue—I mean, the language through which expression comes about. And among nations, some are large and some small.

The first natural cause for the difference in nations with respect to these objects are [various] things. One of them is the difference in the parts of the heavenly bodies that face them with respect to the first sphere, then with respect to the sphere of the fixed stars. Then, there is the difference in the positions of the inclined spheres from parts of the earth and what occurs in those parts because of the spheres' proximity or distance.<sup>29</sup> Following that is the difference in the parts of the earth that are the dwelling-places of the nations. For, from the outset, this difference follows from the difference in the parts of the first sphere facing them, then the difference in the fixed stars facing them, and then the difference in the positions of the inclined spheres with respect to them.

66. From the difference in the parts of the earth follows the difference in the vapors that arise from the earth. Because every vapor is generated from a soil, it resembles that soil. Following from the difference in the vapors is the difference in air and the difference in water, due to the water in every country coming into being from the vapors that are beneath the soil of that country. And the air in each country is mixed with the vapor that rises up to it from the soil. [71] Likewise, from the difference in the sphere of the fixed stars facing it, in the first sphere, and in the positions of the inclined spheres follows the difference in air and in water.

From these follow the difference in plants and the difference in the species of nonrational animals; thus, the nutriments of the nations differ. Following from the difference in their nutriments is the difference in the materials and crops from which come to be the people who succeed those

29. The reference is to the spheres within the ecliptic circle and their inclination toward or away from the equator; see Aristotle, *On Coming To Be and Passing Away* 2.10.336a31–336b11.

who pass away. Following from that is the difference in temperaments and in natural states of character. Moreover, the difference in the parts of the heavens that face their heads is also a cause for the difference in temperaments and states of character in a way other than what was mentioned. Likewise, the difference in air is also a cause for the difference in temperaments and states of character in a way other than what was mentioned.

67. Then from the mutual help of these differences and their being mixed arise different minglings according to which the temperaments of nations and their states of character differ. In this way and according to this manner there is a consonance of these natures, a tying of some to others, and rankings of them. And this is the extent reached by the heavenly bodies in perfecting them. Now it is not up to the heavenly bodies to give the other perfections that remain; rather, that is up to the active intellect. To no species other than the human being is it possible for the active intellect to give the remaining perfections.

## [B. The Virtuous City]

### [1. THE ACTIVE INTELLECT AND HUMAN HAPPINESS]

68. In what the active intellect gives the human being, it proceeds in the way the heavenly bodies do. For it first gives the human being a faculty and a principle by which to strive, or by which the human being is able to strive on his own for the rest of the perfections that remain for him. That principle is the primary sciences and the primary intelligibles [72] attained in the rational part of the soul. It gives him those cognitions and those intelligibles only after the human being first proceeds and attains the sense-perceptive and the appetitive parts of the soul through which there come about the longing and loathing following upon sense-perception, as well as the instruments of these two from the parts of the body. Through these two, will is attained.

69. Will is at first only a longing [that comes] from sensation. Longing comes about through the appetitive part and sensation through the sense-perceptive part.

Then, by attaining the imaginative part of the soul and the longing that follows upon it after that, a second will is attained after the first. So this will is a longing [that comes] from imagination. After these two are

attained, it is possible to attain in the rational part the primary cognitions from the active intellect.

At this point, a third kind of will is generated in the human being, namely, the longing [that comes] from reason. This is what is particularly characterized by the name "choice." This is what is in the human being in particular, apart from the rest of the animals. Through this, a human being is able to do what is praiseworthy or blameworthy, noble or base. And because of this, there is reward and punishment. Now the first two wills may come about in nonrational animals. When this [third will] is attained by the human being, it enables him to strive toward happiness or not to do so. Through it he is able to do good or to do bad, the noble or the base.

70. Happiness is unqualified good. Whatever is useful for obtaining happiness and gaining it is also good, not for its own sake but for the sake of its usefulness with respect to happiness. Whatever impedes from happiness in any way is unqualified evil. The good useful for obtaining happiness may be something existing by nature, and that may come about by will. The evil that impedes from happiness may be something [73] that exists by nature, and it may come about by will.

That which is by nature is given only by the heavenly bodies, but not from an intention on their part to help the active intellect toward its purpose nor as an intention to hamper it. For the things useful for the active intellect's purpose, as given by the heavenly bodies, come not from an intention on their part to help the active intellect in that; nor are the natural things that impede it from its purpose due to the heavenly bodies having an intention contrary to the active intellect with respect to that. Rather it is in the substance of the heavenly bodies to give whatever is in the nature of material to receive without their caring about what is useful or harmful to the purpose of the active intellect. Therefore, it is not impossible that in the sum of what is attained from the heavenly bodies there at times be what is suitable to the purpose of the active intellect and at times what is contrary to it.

71. Voluntary good and voluntary evil—namely, the noble and the base—are both generated by the human being in particular. Voluntary good is generated in only one way. That is because the faculties of the human soul are five: the theoretical-rational, the practical-rational, the appetitive, the imaginative, and the sense-perceptive. Happiness, which only the human being can intellect and be conscious of, is [cognized] by

means of the theoretical-rational faculty—not by any other of the rest of the faculties—and that is when he uses the principles and the first cognitions that the active intellect gave him.

For when he is cognizant of it,<sup>30</sup> he then longs for it by means of the appetitive faculty. He deliberates by means of the practical-rational [faculty] about what he ought to do so as to gain it. By means of the instruments of the appetitive [faculty], he does the actions he infers by means of deliberation. The imaginative and the sense-perceptive [faculties] contribute to and are led by the rational [faculty]. They assist it in arousing the human being to the actions by which he gains happiness. Then, everything that a human being generates is good. In this way alone is voluntary good generated. [74]

72. Voluntary evil is generated in the way I will state. Now neither the imaginative nor the sense-perceptive [faculty] is conscious of happiness. Nor is the rational [faculty] conscious of happiness in every state. Rather, the rational [faculty] is conscious of happiness only when it strives to apprehend it. There are many things here that make it possible for the human being to imagine that they are what ought to be the aim and the end in life—like the pleasant and the useful, honor, and similar things.

When a human being slackens in perfecting the theoretical-rational part, he is not conscious of happiness so as to have an appetite for it. He sets up as the goal he is intent on in his life something other than happiness—such as what is useful, what is pleasant, domination, or honor. He longs for it with the appetitive [faculty]. By means of the practical-rational [faculty], he deliberates so as to infer what will gain that end. By means of the instruments of the appetitive faculty, he does those things he has inferred. And the imaginative and the sense-perceptive [faculties] contribute to that. Then, everything that he generates is evil.

Likewise, a human being may have apprehended happiness and become cognizant of it. Yet he does not set it down as his aim and end. He does not long for it or has only a weak longing for it. He sets down as the end he longs for in life another thing other than happiness. And he uses all the rest of his faculties to gain that end. Everything that he generates is evil.

30. That is, happiness.

73. Since what is intended by the existence of the human being is that he obtain happiness, that being the ultimate perfection remaining to be given to the possible existents able to receive it, the way by which it is possible for a human being to come to this happiness ought to be stated. Now that is possible only by the active intellect having first given the primary intelligibles, which are the primary cognitions. Not every human being is created so as to be disposed to receive the first intelligibles, because individual human beings are by nature generated with varied faculties and divergent preparations. So some of them do not by nature receive any of the primary intelligibles. [75] Others receive them, but not as they are—like mad persons. And others receive them as they are. These are the ones whose human innate character is sound. These, in particular, and not the others, are able to gain happiness.

74. People whose innate character is sound share in an innate character that disposes them to receive the intelligibles in which they all share and by which they strive toward objects and actions common to all of them. Then, afterward, they diverge and differ, thereby coming to an innate character that is particular to each one [of them] and to each group. So one among them is disposed to receive certain other intelligibles that are not shared, but are particular [to him], by which he strives toward another genus. Another is disposed to receive other intelligibles that are fitting to be used in a certain other genus without one [person] sharing with his companion in any of what is particular to him. One [person] is disposed to receive many intelligibles that are fitting for one thing in a certain genus, and another is disposed to receive many intelligibles that are fitting for everything in that genus.

Similarly, they may also differ and vary concerning the faculties by which they infer the objects that, concerning a certain genus, are such as to be apprehended by inference. Thus it is not impossible for there to be two [human beings] who are given the very same intelligibles that are fitting for a certain genus, while one of the two naturally infers fewer things with respect to that genus by means of those intelligibles and the other naturally has the ability to infer everything in that genus. Similarly, two [human beings] may have an equal ability to infer the very same things, while one of the two is quicker at inferring and the other slower, or one of the two is quicker at inferring what is most excellent with respect to that genus and the other what is most vile with respect to that genus. There also may be two [human beings] who have an equal ability for inference

and for speed, while one of the two has in addition an ability to guide someone else and to instruct in what he has [76] already inferred, and the other has no ability for guidance or instruction. Similarly, they may be equal with respect to ability for bodily actions.

75. The innate characters that come about by nature do not force anyone or make it necessary for anyone to do that. Rather, it is only that due to these innate characters it comes to be easier for them to do that thing toward which they are disposed by nature. And when an individual is left to his passion and nothing external moves him to its contrary, he is aroused to [do] that thing to which he was said to be disposed. When some external mover moves him to the contrary of that, he is also aroused to its contrary—but with adversity, distress, and hardship, whereas that to which he is accustomed is easy. Those for whom a certain thing is natural may happen to be very adverse to change from what they were created for; indeed, for many of them it may not be possible. That is because their brains were struck at birth by a disease and a natural chronic illness.

76. In addition to what was made natural for them, all of these innate characters need to have the will trained and be educated in the things toward which they are disposed in order that through those things they come to their final perfections or [come] close to the final ones. In a certain genus there may be extraordinary, superb innate characters that are neglected and not trained or educated in the things toward which they are disposed. So as time is drawn out in that way, their strength becomes nullified. And some among them may be educated in the vile things in that genus. Thus they emerge as extraordinary in doing and inferring the vile things from that genus. [77]

77. By nature, people vary with respect to rankings in accordance with the variation in the rankings of the kinds<sup>31</sup> of arts and sciences toward which they are naturally disposed. Then, those who are disposed by nature toward a certain kind [of art and science] vary in accordance with the variation in the parts of that kind. For those who are disposed to a

31. The term is “genera” (*ajnās*). Here and in what follows in this section, Alfarabi uses this term or the singular “genus” (*jins*) when speaking of the different sorts of arts and sciences.



viler part of that kind [of art and science] are beneath those who are disposed to a more excellent part. Then, those who are naturally disposed to a certain kind [of art and science] or to a part of that kind also vary in accordance with the perfection or defectiveness of [their] being disposed.

Then, afterward, inhabitants of equal natures vary with respect to the way they are educated in the things toward which they are disposed. Those who are equally educated vary according to their ability with respect to inference. For the one who has an ability to infer with respect to a certain kind [of art and science] is the ruler over one having no ability to infer what is in that kind. And one having the ability to infer more things is the ruler over one having the ability to infer only fewer things.

Then, the latter vary with respect to the faculties they have procured from education for good or bad guidance and instruction. For the one who has the ability for good guidance and instruction is the ruler over one having no faculty for guidance.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, when those possessing natures more defective with respect to a particular kind [of art and science] than the extraordinary natures are educated in that kind, they become more excellent [in it] than one of the inhabitants with extraordinary natures not educated in anything. Those educated in what is most excellent with respect to that kind [of art and science] are rulers over those educated in what is most vile with respect to that kind.

So one having an extraordinary nature with respect to a certain kind [of art and science], who is educated in everything he is disposed to by nature, is a ruler not only over one not having an extraordinary nature with respect to that kind [of art and science], but also over one having an extraordinary nature with respect to that kind [of art and science], who is not educated or is educated only in some trifling thing of what is in that kind [of art and science]. [78]

## [2. DIFFERENT KINDS OF RULERS OR GUIDES TO HAPPINESS]

78. Since what is intended by the existence of the human being is that he obtain ultimate happiness, to obtain it he needs to know happiness and to set it before his eyes as his end. Then, after that, he needs to know the things that ought to be done so as to gain happiness by means of them, then to perform those deeds.

32. Reading *al-irshad* with Feyzullah 1279, rather than *al-istinbat* ("inference") with Najjar and the other mss.

Because of what was said with respect to the difference in innate characters in individual human beings, the innate character of every human being does not on its own know happiness or the things that ought to be done; rather, for that, there is need for an instructor and a guide. Some need slight guidance and some much guidance. Nor, when he is guided to these two,<sup>33</sup> does he inevitably do what he has been instructed and guided to do without an external spur and being aroused toward it. Most people are like this. Therefore, they need someone who acquaints them with all of that and arouses them to do it.

It is not within the power of every human being to guide someone else. Nor is it within the power of every human being to prompt someone else to do these things. One having no ability at all to arouse someone else to do one of the things or to use him in it, having instead only the ability to do always what he is guided to, is in no way a ruler—not with respect to anything. Rather, he is always ruled in everything. One who has the power to guide someone else to a particular thing, to prompt him to do it, or to use him in it, is—with respect to that thing—a ruler over the one who is not able to do that thing by himself, but is able to when guided toward it and instructed in doing it. Then, one having the ability to arouse someone else toward that thing he was instructed in and guided toward and use him in it is a ruler over one human being and ruled by another human being.

The ruler may be a first<sup>34</sup> ruler, and he may be a secondary ruler. The secondary ruler is the one who is ruled by one human being while he rules another human being. [79] These two rulerships may be about a particular kind [of art and science], like farming, and like commerce and medicine. And they may be in relation to all the human kinds [of art and science].

79. The first ruler without qualification is the one who does not need—not in anything at all—to be ruled by another human being. Rather, he has already attained the sciences and cognitions in actuality and has no need of a human being to guide him in anything. He has the ability for excellent apprehension of each and every particular thing that ought to be done and the faculty for excellently guiding everyone other than himself to all that he has instructed them in; the ability to use everyone as a means

33. That is, to happiness and the things that ought to be done in order to achieve it.

34. Or “primary” or even “supreme” (*arwwal*).

to do a particular thing pertaining to that action he is intent on; and the ability to determine, define, and direct the activities toward happiness.

That comes about only in an inhabitant having a great, extraordinary nature<sup>35</sup> when his soul has joined with the active intellect. He obtains that only by having first attained the passive intellect, then, after that, having attained the intellect called “acquired.”<sup>36</sup> Through attaining the acquired [intellect] there comes about the conjunction with the active intellect that was mentioned in the book *On the Soul*.

80. This human being is the king in truth according to the ancients, and he is the one of whom it ought to be said that he receives revelation. For a human being receives revelation only when he obtains this rank, and that is when there remains no intermediary between him and the active intellect. Now the passive intellect is similar to material and a subject for the acquired intellect. And the acquired intellect is similar to material and a subject for the active intellect.

Then, there emanates from the active intellect to the passive intellect the faculty by which he is able to seize on the definition of things and actions and direct them toward happiness. This emanation proceeding from the active intellect to the passive intellect by the intermediary [80] of the acquired intellect is revelation. Because the active intellect is an emanation from the existence of the first cause, it is possible due to this to say that the first cause is what brings revelation to this human being by the intermediary of the active intellect. The rulership of this human being is the first rulership, and the rest of the human rulerships are subsequent to this one and proceed from it. And that is evident.

81. The people who are governed by the rulership of this ruler are the virtuous, good, and happy people. If they are a nation, then that is the virtuous nation. If they are people who have come together in a single dwelling-place, then the dwelling-place that brings all these together under this rulership is the virtuous city. If they have not come together in

35. Literally, “inhabitants having great, extraordinary natures” (*aḥl al-ṭibā’i al-‘aẓma al-fā’iqā*); but the context, as well as the following “his soul” (*naḥsuh*), point to the singular.

36. Literally, “procured” (*al-mustafād*); so, too, in the next sentence and throughout the rest of this discussion. Though the discussion centers on Aristotle’s *On the Soul* 3.5.430a10–25 and 3.7.431a1–431b19, the term “acquired intellect” comes not from Aristotle, but from Alexander of Aphrodisias in his own *On the Soul*.

a single dwelling-place, but are in separate dwelling-places whose inhabitants are governed by rulerships other than this one, then they are virtuous people who are strangers in those dwelling-places. They happen to be separate either because they have not yet chanced upon a city in which it is possible for them to come together or because they already were in a city but disasters happened to them—such as enemy aggression, epidemic, drought, or something else—forcing them to separate.

82. If there happens to be an association of these kings at a single moment in a single city, a single nation, or many nations, then their whole association is like a single king due to the agreement in their endeavors, purposes, opinions,<sup>37</sup> and ways of life. If they succeed one another in time, their souls will be as a single soul. The second will proceed according to the way of life of the first, and the one now present according to the way of life of the one who has passed away. Just as it is permissible for one of them to change a Law<sup>38</sup> he legislated at one moment if he is of the opinion that it is more fitting to change it at another moment, [81] so may the one now present who succeeds the one who has passed away change what the one who has passed away has already legislated. For the one who has passed away would change [it] himself, were he to observe the [new] condition. When there does not happen to be a human being of this condition, the Laws that the former [kings] prescribed or ordained are to be adopted, then written down and preserved, and the city is to be governed by means of them. So the ruler who governs the city by means of written Laws adopted from past leaders is the king of traditional law.<sup>39</sup>

### [3. ATTAINING HAPPINESS]

83. When each of the inhabitants of the city does what is such as to be entrusted to him—having either learned that on his own or the ruler having guided and prompted him to it—those actions of his make him acquire good traits of the soul. So, too, does persistence in the good

37. Reading *wa arā'ihim* with Feyzullah 1279 rather than *wa irādatihim* ("and their wills") with Najjar and the rest of the mss.

38. The Arabic term is *sharī'a*, and the verb translated in what follows as "legislate" is *sharra'a*. Similarly, the Arabic word translated as "Laws" is *sharā'i*, the plural of *shar'a*. The term *nāmūs* ("nomos" or "convention") does not occur in this work.

39. The term is *sunna* and is usually used to refer to the sayings and deeds of the Prophet.

actions of writing make a human being acquire goodness in the art of writing—which is a trait of the soul. The more he persists in them, the more powerful goodness in writing becomes in him. His pleasure in the trait he attains in his soul is greater, and the delight of his soul in that trait is stronger. Similarly, the actions that are determined and directed toward happiness empower the part of the soul disposed by innate character toward happiness and make it become actual and perfect. So, from the power attained in becoming perfect, it manages to dispense with material and gets to be free from it. Yet it does not perish when material perishes, since in its constitution and its existence it has come not to need material. Then it attains happiness.

84. It is evident that the types of happiness attained by the inhabitants of the city vary in quantity and quality in accordance with the variation in the perfections they procure through civic<sup>40</sup> actions. And in accordance with that, the pleasures they gain vary. For when the soul attains separation from material and becomes incorporeal, the accidents that affect [82] bodies insofar as they are bodies are removed from it. So it cannot be said of it that it moves or that it rests. Then the sayings that are proper for what is not corporeal ought to be said of it. Everything befalling the human soul that describes body insofar as it is body ought to be negated of separated souls. To understand and to form a concept of this condition is difficult and not customary, in the way it is difficult to form a concept of substances that are not bodies nor in bodies.

85. When a group passes away, and their bodies are nullified, and their souls are delivered and made happy, then other people follow after them, take their place in the city, and perform their activities; the souls of these [people], too, are delivered. When their bodies are nullified, they come to the rankings of those in this group who have passed away. They are neighborly to them in the way that what is not corporeal is neighborly. And they join with the similar souls of the people of the single group,<sup>41</sup> some with others. Whenever the similar separate souls multiply and some join with others, the pleasure of each one increases. Whenever one of those who came after attaches to them, the pleasure of the one now attaching increases due to his encountering those who passed away. And

40. Or “political” (*al-madaniyya*); see above, sec. 64, n. 28.

41. That is, the group whose members have passed away.

the pleasures of those who passed away increase through joining with those who attach to them because each one intellects his essence and intellects the same as his essence many times. What is thereby intellected increases as the ones now present attach to them in future time. So there will be a boundless increase of pleasures for each one with the passing of time. That is the condition of each group.

This, then, is the true ultimate happiness that is the purpose of the active intellect.

86. When the actions of the inhabitants of a particular city are not directed toward happiness, they make them acquire traits [83] of the soul that are bad just as when the actions of writing are bad, they produce bad writing. Similarly, when the actions of any art are bad, they provide the soul bad traits with respect to that genus of those arts. And their souls become sick. Thus, they are pleased by the traits they earn through their actions just as, due to the corruption of their sense-perception, those with sick bodies—like those with fevers—take pleasure in bitter things, find them sweet, and are pained by sweet things, which appear bitter to their palates. Similarly, due to the corruption of their imagination, those with sick souls take pleasure in bad traits.

Just as among the sick there is someone who is not conscious of his disease and someone who, in addition, presumes that he is healthy—and someone among the sick who is such as this does not at all heed what a physician says—so, too, is there among those with sick souls someone who is not conscious of his sickness and who, in addition, presumes that he is virtuous and has a sound soul. So he does not at all heed what a guide, instructor, or reformer says. Thus the souls of these people remain material<sup>42</sup> and do not come to a perfection such that they are separate from material; so when their material is nullified, they also are nullified.

87. The rankings of the inhabitants of the city vary with respect to rulership and service in accordance with their innate characters and in accordance with the way they have been educated. The first ruler is the one who ranks the groups and each human being in each group according to the ranking it or he merits—that is, either in a ranking of service or a ranking of rulership. Thus, there will be rankings close to his [own] ranking, rankings slightly distant from it, and rankings greatly distant from it.

42. Literally, “hylic” (*hayulāniyya*); see above, sec. 9 and n. 6.

Those are the rankings of rulership, and they descend little by little from the highest rank until they come to be the rankings of service in which there is no rulership and beneath which there is no other ranking.

When the ruler, after making these rankings, then wants to define a command about an object that he wants to prompt the inhabitants of the city or a group among the inhabitants of the city to do [84] and wants to arouse them toward it, he intimates that to the rankings closest to him; and they intimate it to whoever comes after them. Then it goes on like that until it arrives at the one who is ranked as serving that affair. Thus the parts of the city are then tied to one another, in consonance with one another, and ranked with some having precedence and others being subordinate. It comes to resemble the natural existents, and its rankings also resemble the rankings of the existents that begin at the first [cause] and terminate at primary material and the elements. The way it is tied together and its consonance are similar to the way the different existents are tied to one another and to their consonance. And the governor of that city is similar to the first cause through which the rest of the existents exist.

Then the rankings of the existents go on descending little by little, each of them coming to be ruler and ruled, until they terminate at the possible existents that have no rulership at all but only serve and exist for the sake of something else—namely, primary material and the elements.

88. Happiness is obtained only by removing evils from cities and from nations—not just the voluntary ones, but also the natural ones—and by their attaining all the goods—the natural ones and the voluntary ones. Now the function of the city's governor—that is, the king—is to govern cities so as to tie the parts of the city to one another and to give it consonance and make a ranking such that the inhabitants assist one another in removing evils and attaining goods. And [his function is] to look into everything given by the heavenly bodies. Whatever suitably assists or is useful in a particular way for obtaining happiness, he retains and increases. Whatever is harmful, he struggles to render useful. And what he is unable to do that with, he nullifies or decreases. In general, he seeks to nullify both of the evils and to bring into existence<sup>43</sup> both of the goods.

43. Reading *wa ijad* with Feyzullah 1279 instead of *wa ijab* ("and to affirm") with Najjar and the rest of the mss. The two evils and goods in question are the voluntary and natural ones.

Each of the inhabitants of the virtuous city needs to be cognizant of the ultimate principles of the existents, their rankings, happiness, the first rulership that belongs to the virtuous city, and the rankings of its rulership. Then, after that, [85] [each needs to be cognizant of] the defined actions by which happiness is gained when they are performed. These actions are not to be restricted to being known without being done and the inhabitants of the city being brought to do them.

89. Now a human being either forms a concept of the principles of the existents, their rankings, happiness, and the rulership of the virtuous cities and intellects them or imagines them. To form a concept of them is to have their essences sketched in the human soul as they exist in truth. To imagine them is to have their images, their likenesses, and the objects representing them sketched in the human soul. That is similar to what is possible with objects that are seen—for example, a human being. Either we see him himself, we see a statue of him, we see an image of him in water, or we see an image of his statue in water or in other mirrors. Now our seeing him resembles the intellect's forming a concept of the principles of the existents, happiness, and the rest. And our seeing a human being in water or our seeing a statue of him resembles imagination. For our seeing a statue of him or our seeing him in a mirror is our seeing what represents him. Similarly, our imagining those things is in truth our forming a concept of what represents them, not our forming a concept of them in themselves.

90. Most people have no ability, either by innate character or by custom, to understand and form a concept of those things. For those people, an image ought to be made, by means of things that represent them, of how the principles, their rankings, the active intellect, and the first ruler come about.

While their meanings and essences are one and immutable, the things by which they are represented are many and different. Some are closer to what is represented and others more distant. That is just as it is with visible things. For the image of a human being seen in water is closer to the human being in truth than the image of the statue of a human being seen in water. Therefore it is possible to represent these things to one group and one nation by objects other than those by which they are represented to another group and another nation.



Thus it may be possible [86] for the religions of virtuous nations and virtuous cities to differ even if they all pursue the very same happiness. For religion is a sketch of these things or of their images in the soul. Since it is difficult for the public to understand these things in themselves and the way they exist, instructing them about these things is sought by other ways—and those are the ways of representation. So these things are represented to each group or nation by things of which they are more cognizant. And it may be possible that what one of them is more cognizant of is not what another is more cognizant of.

Most people who pursue happiness pursue what is imagined, not what they form a concept of. Similarly, the principles such as to be accepted, imitated, extolled, and exalted are accepted by most people as they imagine them, not as they form a concept of them. Those who pursue happiness as they form a concept of it and accept the principles as they form a concept of them are the wise, whereas those in whose souls these things are found as they are imagined and who accept them and pursue them as though they are like that are the faithful.

91. The objects by which these things are represented vary so that some are wiser and more complete in imagination and others more defective, some are closer to the truth and others further from it. With some, the topics of contention are few or concealed; or it is difficult to contend against them. With others, the topics of contention are many or apparent; or it is easy to contend against and to refute them.

It is not impossible that the things by which these are presented imaginatively to the inhabitants be different objects and, in spite of their difference, be linked to one another—that is, that there be objects used to represent those things, other things to represent these objects, and yet a third set of objects to represent these things—or that the different objects used to represent those things—I mean, the principles of the existents, happiness, and its rankings—be equivalent in their representation.

If [87] all of them were equivalent with respect to the goodness of their representation or the topics of contention in them being few or concealed, all or any one of them chanced upon would be used. And if they were to vary, those chosen would be the ones most complete in representation or those in which the topics of contention were either nonexistent at all, trifling, or concealed; then would come those closest to the truth. Representations other than these would be discarded.

## [C. The Different Kinds of Nonvirtuous Cities]

## [1. THE CITIES CONTRARY TO THE VIRTUOUS CITY]

92. Contrary to the virtuous city are the [a] ignorant city, [b] immoral city, and [c] errant city. Then there are [d] the weeds in the virtuous city; for the status of weeds in cities is that of darnel in wheat, the thorns of plants within the crop, or the rest of the grasses that are useless or harmful to the crop or seedlings.

Then there are [e] the people who are bestial by nature.<sup>44</sup> Now those who are bestial by nature are not citizens, nor do they have any civic associations at all. Rather, some of them are like domesticated beasts and some like wild beasts. And some of the latter are like predatory animals. Similarly, among them is to be found those who abide separately in the wilderness, those who abide in associations while cavorting like predatory animals, and those who abide close to cities. Among them are those who eat only raw meat, those who graze on wild plants, and those who ravish [their prey] as do the predatory animals. These are found at the extremities of the inhabited dwelling-places, either at the northern or the southern tips. And they ought to be treated as beasts. Now any one of them who is domestic and useful in some way to the cities is to be spared, enslaved, and used as beasts are used. What is done to the rest of the harmful animals is to be done to any of them who is not useful or is harmful. The same ought to be done to any children of the inhabitants of the cities who happen to be bestial.

## [2. THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF THE IGNORANT CITY]

93. The inhabitants of the ignorant [cities] are citizens,<sup>45</sup> and their cities and civic associations are of many manners: [88] among them are [a] the necessary associations, [b] the association of depraved inhabitants in the depraved cities, [c] the vile association in the vile cities, [d] the association of [seekers of] honor in the timocratic cities, [e] the association of domination in the city of domination, and [f] the association of freedom in the democratic city<sup>46</sup> and the city of the free.

44. There is no further discussion of these people or their subgroups.

45. Or "city people" (*madaniyyūn*).

46. Literally, "the associational city" (*al-madīna al-jamā'iyya*). See below, secs. 113–119.

## [a. The Necessary City]

94. The necessary city or necessary association is the one in which there is mutual assistance for earning what is necessary to constitute and safeguard bodies. There are many ways of earning these things such as farming, herding, hunting, stealing, and others. Both hunting and stealing involve wiliness and openness. Among the necessary cities, there may be some that bring together all of the arts that procure what is necessary. With others, earning what is necessary comes about by a single art such as farming alone or another single one [of the arts].

According to them,<sup>47</sup> the most virtuous one is he who is most excellent at [a] using stratagems for, [b] governing, and [c] making available the ways by which the inhabitants of the city arrive at earning what is necessary. Their ruler is the one who has fine governance and excellent stratagems for using them so that they gain the necessary things and fine governance in preserving these things for them or who bestows these things on them from what he has.

## [b. The Plutocratic City]

95. The depraved city or association of depraved inhabitants is the one in which they assist one another in gaining prosperity and wealth, being excessive in acquiring the necessities and what takes their place with respect to dirhams and dinars, and accumulating them beyond [89] the extent they are needed. [This is] for nothing other than love of, and greed for, wealth, while spending of it only what is necessary to constitute bodies. That comes about either by all of the means of earning or by the means available in that country.

According to them, the one most virtuous is the most wealthy and most excellent at using stratagems to obtain prosperity. Their ruler is the human being capable of excellently governing them so that they earn wealth and preserve it always. Wealth is gained through all the ways by which what is necessary is gained—namely, farming, herding, hunting, and stealing—and then voluntary interactions such as commerce, leasing, and others.

## [c. The Hedonistic City]

96. The city of vileness or association of the vile is the one in which they assist one another in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure or imaginary

47. That is, the inhabitants of the necessary city or association.

pleasure—such as play or jesting—or both together, as well as in the enjoyment of the pleasure of eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. The most pleasant of these is chosen in order to seek pleasure not, by means of it, to seek what constitutes the body or is useful to the body in some way, but only to be pleased by it. And so, too, with play and jesting.

According to the inhabitants of the ignorant [cities], this city is the happy and delightful one, because it is possible for them to obtain the purpose of this city only after having attained what is necessary and after having attained wealth.

[d. The Timocratic City]

97. The honor-seeking city or the association of [seekers of] honor is the one in which they aid one another to arrive at being honored in speech and in action. That is either by the inhabitants of other cities honoring them or by some of them honoring others. The honor some accord others is either equal or varied.

Equal honor is simply [90] that they exchange honor with one another by one bestowing one species of honor on another at a particular moment so that at another moment the other bestows on him that species of honor or another species whose power according to them is the same as that [first] species. The varied [exchange of honor] is for one to bestow on another one species of honor and the other to bestow on the first honor of greater power than the first species. All of this proceeds among them in that way according to merit in that the second merits honor of a certain extent and the first merits greater honor—that being in keeping with what is meritorious according to them.

98. Now according to the inhabitants of the ignorant cities, what is meritorious is not virtue, but [a] wealth, [b] making available for one another the causes of pleasure and play and obtaining the most of these two, [c] obtaining the most of what is necessary such that a human being is sufficiently served with all he needs of what is necessary, or [d] a human being acting in a useful manner—that is, doing good—to others with respect to these three things.

There is [e] another thing very beloved of many of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities, namely, domination. According to many of them, the one who achieves it is to be admired. Therefore, that ought also to be counted among what is meritorious for the ignorant cities. For, according to them, the most exalted thing a human being is to be honored for

is being well-known for domination over one, two, or many things; not being dominated either due to himself, because his supporters are many or powerful, or both of these; and not being subjected to what is loathsome, while subjecting someone else to what is loathsome when he wills. This, according to them, is one of the conditions of delight for which, according to them, a human being merits honor. The more virtuous he is in this [91] object, the more he is honored.

Or [vi] for a human being to have distinguished ancestry, according to them. According to them, distinguished ancestry goes back to one of the things that preceded, that is, that his fathers and grandfathers were either wealthy, had much pleasure and the causes for making it available, had domination over many things, were useful to others with respect to these things—either to an association or to inhabitants of a city—or that available to them were the instruments for these such as nobility, endurance, or contempt for death. For these are the instruments of domination.

99. Equal honor sometimes has to do with merit coming from another, external thing. Sometimes honor itself is the merit, so that the human being who begins and honors another thereby merits being honored by the other, as takes place with market interactions. According to them, the one who merits more honor is the ruler over someone such as to be honored less. This variation does not cease ascending until it terminates at the one who merits more honor than anyone other than him in the city. That one comes to be the ruler of the city and its king. Since it is like that, that one ought to have more merit than anyone other than himself. What, according to them, are meritorious things are the ones we have enumerated.

100. If it is like that and if, according to them, rulership comes only through distinguished ancestry, then he [the ruler] ought to have more distinguished ancestors than anyone else. And, similarly, if honor according to them comes only through wealth. Then people vary and are ranked according to their extent of wealth and distinguished ancestry. Someone who has no wealth or any distinguished ancestors has no access to rulerships or honors. It is like that when the meritorious things are [92] objects whose good does not extend beyond him, and these are the vilest among the rulers of honor. And if he is honored only for the sake of his usefulness to the inhabitants of the city with respect to the endeavor and passion of the inhabitants of the city, that occurs insofar as he is useful to them

with respect to wealth, pleasures, arriving at having others honor them or at other things among the desires of the inhabitants of the city—either bestowing these things on them from what he has or gaining them for them through his fine governance and preserving them for them.

101. According to them, the most virtuous of these rulers is the one who gains these things for the inhabitants of the city and does not bother himself with anything other than honor alone—such as his gaining wealth for them and not seeking wealth, or his gaining pleasures for them and not seeking pleasures—but seeks honor alone and being praised, extolled, and magnified in speech and action so that his name becomes well-known for that among the rest of the nations during his time and afterward and memory of him remains for a long time. This is the one who merits honor according to them. Many times, this one needs money and wealth to bestow in getting the inhabitants of the city to arrive at their desires concerning wealth or pleasure and in preserving it for them. When these deeds of his are greater, he ought to be wealthier; and that wealth of his comes to be a reserve for the inhabitants of the city.

102. So some of them seek wealth for this reason and are of the opinion that these expenditures of theirs are due to generosity and liberality. They take that money from the city either in the manner of a tax or they dominate a faction other than the inhabitants of the city for their money, bring it to the treasure-house, and use it as a reserve for making great expenditures in the city so as to gain greater honor.

When someone loves honor by whatever means it chances to come about, it is not impossible for him to establish a [93] distinguished ancestry for himself and his offspring after him. And in order that memory of him remains after him through his offspring, he places ownership in his offspring or in his family.<sup>48</sup> Then it is not impossible for him to establish wealth for himself to be honored for it, even if it is of no use to anyone else. Then he also honors a faction so that they will also honor him. Thus he brings together all the things for which it is possible that people will honor him, then keeps particularly for himself things for which, according to them, he will have splendor, radiance, eminence, and magnificence—such as buildings, clothing, medals, [and] then being inaccessible to the people.

48. Literally, “in his genus” (*fi jinsih*). When the term “family” occurs later in this section, it is also literally “genus.”

Then he legislates traditional laws<sup>49</sup> concerning honors. When rulership devolves upon him and the people are accustomed to him and his family being their king, he then ranks the people in such a way as to attain honor and magnificence. For each ranking, he legislates a kind of honor and what merits honor—such as wealth, buildings, clothing, medals, mounts, or other things that make his command magnificent. And he sets that down according to an order. After that, he tends to prefer the people who honor him more or assist him more in that magnificence of his. And he honors and gives honors on that basis. Now the inhabitants of his city who love honor interact in this way with him so that he will increase the honors he bestows on them. Due to that, the inhabitants of the rankings beneath them and above them honor them.

103. Due to these things, this city is similar to the virtuous city, especially if the honors and the rankings of the people with respect to honors are for the sake of what is more useful for others—such as wealth, [94] pleasures, or any other thing for which the one who seeks useful things has a passion. This city is the best among the ignorant cities.<sup>50</sup> It is the one whose inhabitants—unlike the inhabitants of the other cities—are [properly] called “ignorant” and similar names. However, if the love of honor in it becomes very excessive, it becomes a city of tyrants and is fit for being transformed into becoming a city of domination.

#### [e. The City of Domination]

104. The city of domination and the association of domination are the ones whose inhabitants assist one another so that they have domination. They are like that when they all have love of domination in common. Yet they diverge from one another insofar as they love it less or more, and they diverge from one another with respect to the kinds of domination and the kinds of things for which they dominate people. Some, for example, love to dominate to spill a human being's blood, some love to dominate for his money, and some love to dominate over his soul so as to enslave him. People are ranked with respect to it<sup>51</sup> according to the great

49. Here and in what follows, the term is *sunna*; see above, sec. 82, n. 39.

50. Bracketing, for sense, *ahl* (“inhabitants”), so that the phrase reads *khayr mudun al-jāhiliyya*. The phrase *khayr mudun ahl al-jāhiliyya* is bewildering.

51. Understanding the prepositional clause *fiḥa* to refer to domination (*ghalaba*); but it can also be construed as referring to the city itself, in which case it should read “people are ranked in it.”

extent of domination one person loves [to exercise] and the paucity of it that most love [to exercise]. Their love to dominate others is directed at their blood [so as to spill it] and their spirits [so as to extinguish them], their souls so as to enslave them, or their money so as to wrest it from them. Their love and their purpose in all of that are domination, conquest, humiliation, and that the conquered possesses neither himself nor any other thing for the sake of which he has been dominated but is subject to obeying the conqueror in whatever passion he has. Thus when one of those who love domination and conquest has an ambition or passion for a certain thing, then gains it without conquering any human being for it, he does not take it and pays no attention to it.

105. Among them are those of the opinion that they should conquer by wiliness, those of the opinion that they should conquer only by severity, and some of the opinion [95] that they should conquer by both manners—by wiliness and by severity. Therefore, many of those who conquer so as to spill blood do not kill a human being when they find him sleeping nor take money from him until they awaken him; rather, they are of the opinion that they should take it by severity and have the other actively resist so that they conquer him and inflict on him what he loathes. Every one of these loves domination and thus loves to dominate all others, whether they are inhabitants of the city or others. However, they refrain from dominating one another with respect to spilling their blood or taking their money due to the need they have of one another so as to survive, to assist one another in dominating others, and to prevent others from dominating them.

106. Their ruler is the one among them who is most powerful in governing well by using them to dominate others, the one most excellent at using stratagems, and the one most perfect in opinion about what they ought to do so as always to be seen as dominators and to prevent others from dominating them. He is their ruler and their king. And they are enemies of all others. All of their traditional laws are traditional laws and prescriptions such that, when adhered to, they are fit for dominating others. Their rivalry and boasting is either about the frequency of their domination, its greatness, or their abundant acquisition of the equipment and instruments of domination.

Equipment and instruments of domination consist either in a human being's opinion, in his body, or in what is external to his body—in his body, endurance, for example; external to his body, having weapons;



and in his opinion, having excellent opinion about what allows him to dominate another. These human beings tend to be crude, cruel, irascible, haughty, and gluttonous in stuffing themselves with food and drink, overindulging in sexual intercourse, and dominating one another for all the goods. And that should come about through conquering and humiliating whoever has any of them. They are of the opinion that they should dominate everything and everybody. [96]

107. Sometimes the whole city is like this so that they are of the opinion that, due to their need for association and not for any other thing, they should be intent on dominating anyone not from the city.

Sometimes the ones dominated and the conquerors are neighbors in a single city. Then the conquerors either love to conquer and dominate in an equal degree and have equal rankings in the city or they have [different] rankings, with each one dominating over the conquered neighbors about something and doing so less or more than another. Similarly, with respect to the powers and opinions by which they dominate, they draw close to the king who rules them and governs the conquerors' affairs as concerns the instruments by which they arrive at conquest.

Sometimes the conqueror is only a single person with a faction as his instruments for conquering the rest of the people. Their endeavor is not to dominate something and take it for someone else, but to dominate a thing so that it will belong to that single person. In turn, what that single person uses to maintain his life and endurance is sufficient for him; he gives [the rest] to others and dominates for others, as do dogs and falcons. Likewise, the rest of the inhabitants of the city are slaves serving that single person in whatever he has a passion for; humiliated and submissive, they possess nothing of their own at all. Some of them cultivate the soil for him, others trade for him. His intention in that is nothing more than seeing a faction be conquered, dominated, and humiliated by him alone, even though he gains no other use from them nor any pleasure except that they be humiliated and conquered.

By its king alone is this a city of domination. The rest of the inhabitants of the city are not ones who dominate. The one previous to this is a city of domination by half of its inhabitants, and the first is one by all of them.<sup>52</sup>

52. By "the one previous to this" Alfarabi means the city in which "the ones dominated and the conquerors are neighbors in a single city"; and by "the first city" he means the one where "the whole city is . . . of the opinion that . . . they should be intent on dominating anyone not from the city." For these, see the accounts in the first two paragraphs of this section.

108. So the city of domination may be of this sort in that it endeavors by one of these means only to dominate and to take pleasure in doing so. If it loves domination only so as to attain the necessary things, wealth, [97] enjoyment of pleasures, honors, or all of these, then that is a city of domination of a different sort. These [inhabitants] belong to those other cities mentioned above. Though many people call these cities the city of domination, the one most deserving of this name is the one that wants [to obtain] all three of these by conquest.<sup>53</sup> And these cities are of three sorts, namely, [domination] by one of the inhabitants, by half of the inhabitants, or by all of the inhabitants.<sup>54</sup> Thus, these inhabitants pursue conquest and mistreatment, not for their own sake, but with an intention and a purpose for something else.

109. There are yet other cities intent on these [things] along with domination. In the first, which is intent on domination however it comes about and for anything whatsoever, someone may chance to harm another without any benefit coming to him from that—like killing for no reason<sup>55</sup> other than the simple pleasure of conquest. And in it there is domination for vile things, as is recounted about a faction among the Arabs.

With the second, there is love of domination for the sake of things that, according to them, are highly praiseworthy and are not vile. When they gain these things without conquest, they do not resort to conquest.

In the third city, there is harming and killing only insofar as it is known that it is useful for one of the venerable things. When the things one [of the inhabitants] is intent on are made available to him without domination or conquest—by, for example, a treasure existing, someone else sufficing, or some human being bestowing that thing on him obediently—he does not destroy others, pay any attention to them, or take from them. These people are also called high-minded and prideful. [98]

53. Though Najjar thinks the word “three” (*al-thalāth*) may be an interpolation, he notes its presence in all the mss. and suggests an interpretation based on the punctuation of Feyzullah 1279, where the goods to be attained by domination—listed two sentences earlier—fall into three groups: “the necessary things, wealth, or enjoyment of pleasures; honors; or all of these”; see “Alfarabi: The Political Regime,” in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, 1st ed. (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 48, n. 5.

54. See above, sec. 107, end, and n. 52.

55. The term is *sabab*; heretofore, it has been translated as “cause.” Its cognate, *‘illa* does not occur in this book.

110. The inhabitants of the first city restrict themselves to such conquest as is necessary so as to attain domination. Sometimes they contest and struggle mightily when prevented from getting money or a soul, and they quarrel until they are triumphant and can implement their judgment and passion on it, then abandon it and do not take it. These, too, may be praised, honored, and extolled for this. Those who love honor may use many of these things so as to be honored for them. The cities of domination are more often tyrannical than honor-seeking.

111. It may occur that the inhabitants of the city of wealth and the inhabitants of the city of play and jesting presume themselves to be delightful, happy, masterful, and more virtuous than the inhabitants of the rest of the cities. Because of what they presume of themselves, it may occur that they have contempt for the inhabitants of other cities, consider those other than them to have no value, and expect love and honor for what—according to them—makes them happy. So it occurs that they become conceited, haughty, boastful, praise-loving; that [they presume] others cannot reach what they have reached; and [presume] that they are therefore too stupid to get even one of these two kinds of happiness.<sup>56</sup> They create for themselves names that embellish their ways of life—for example, that they are the naturally gifted and elegant ones and that those other than them are the crude. Therefore it is presumed that they possess pride, magnanimity, and authority. Sometimes they are called high-minded.

112. When it chances that the lovers of wealth, pleasure, and play attain none of the arts by which wealth is earned except the power to dominate and they arrive at wealth and play by conquest and domination, they become more intensely prideful and enter into the troop of tyrants. The first are simpletons.<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, it is not impossible for there to be among those who love honor someone who loves it not for its own sake, but for wealth. Now many of them want others to honor them so as to gain wealth, either from those [who honor them] or from someone else. They want rulership over, and obedience from, the inhabitants of the city so as to arrive at wealth. And many [99] of them want wealth for play and pleasure. So it happens that many of them seek rulership and to be obeyed in order to attain

56. Namely, wealth or play and jesting; see the beginning of this section.

57. That is, those discussed above in sec. 111.

wealth to use in play. They are of the opinion that the greater and more complete their rulership and the obedience of others to them, the more increase they will have in these things. So they seek to be the only ones to rule over the inhabitants of the city so as to attain the magnificence by which they can arrive at such great wealth that none of the inhabitants can approximate it, then to use that wealth in play and to gain from play and the pleasures of food, drink, and sexual intercourse what no one else gains with respect to both quantity and quality.

[f. The Democratic City]

113. The democratic city is the city in which every one of its inhabitants is unrestrained and left to himself to do what he likes. Its inhabitants are equal to one another, and their traditional law is that no human being is superior to another in anything at all. Its inhabitants are free to do what they like. One [inhabitant] has authority over another or over someone else only insofar as he does what heightens that person's freedom.

Thus there arise among them many moral habits, many endeavors, many desires, and taking pleasure in countless things. Its inhabitants consist of countless similar and dissimilar groups. In this city are brought together those [associations] that were kept separate in all those [other] cities—the vile and the venerable ones. Rulerships come about through any chance one of the rest of those things we have mentioned. The public, which does not have what the rulers have, has authority over those who are said to be their rulers. The one who rules them does so only by the will of the ruled, and their rulers are subject to the passions of the ruled. If their situation is examined closely, it turns out that in truth there is no ruler among them and no ruled.

114. Yet those who are praised and honored among them are [a] those who bring the inhabitants of the city to freedom and to everything encompassing their passions and desires and [b] those who preserve their freedom and their diverging, differing desires [100] from [infringement] by one another and by their external enemies while restricting their own desires only to what is necessary. These are the ones among them who are honored, [deemed] most excellent, and obeyed.

Any of the other rulers is either equal to them or inferior to them. He is their equal when, in return for his producing the goods they will and desire, they bestow on him honors and money equivalent to what he does for them. Then they are not of the opinion that he has superiority over them. They are superior to him when they bestow honors on him and

establish a share of their money for him without receiving any benefit from him.

So it is not impossible for there to be a ruler of this sort whose condition is that he chances to be magnified by the inhabitants of the city either because the inhabitants of the city have a passion for him or because the right of his forefathers, who had praiseworthy rulership over them, is preserved in him so that he rules. Then the public is in authority over the rulers.

All the endeavors and purposes of the ignorant [cities] are present in this city in the most perfect manner, and more.

115. Of [all] their cities, this is the marvelous and happy city. On the surface, it is like an embroidered garment replete with colored figures and dyes. Everyone loves it and loves to dwell in it, because every human being who has a passion or desire for anything is able to gain it in this city. The nations repair to it and dwell in it, so it becomes great beyond measure. People of every tribe are procreated in it by every sort of pairing off and sexual intercourse. The children generated in it are of very different innate characters and of very different education and upbringing.

Thus this city comes to be many cities, not distinguished from one another but interwoven with one another, the parts of one interspersed among the parts of another. Nor is the foreigner distinguished from the native resident. All of the passions and ways of life come together in it. [101] Therefore, it is not impossible as time draws on that virtuous people emerge in it. There may chance to exist in it wise men, rhetoricians, and poets concerned with every type of object. It is possible to glean from it parts of the virtuous city, and this is the best that emerges in this city. Thus, of the ignorant cities this city has both the most good and the most evil. The bigger, more prosperous, more populous, more fertile, and more perfect it becomes for people, the more prevalent and greater are these two.<sup>58</sup>

116. What the ignorant rulerships are intent on is as numerous as are the ignorant cities. For each ignorant rulership is intent on gaining control over what is necessary; wealth; enjoyment of pleasures; honor, fame, and praise; domination; or freedom. Therefore, these rulerships are bought for money—especially the rulerships that come about in the democratic city.

58. Namely, good and evil.

For no one there is more deserving of rulership than another. So when rulership in it is surrendered to someone, it is either because the inhabitants granted it to him or that they took money or some other recompense from him.

117. According to them, the virtuous ruler is the one who is excellent at deliberation and fine at using stratagems to gain them their different and variegated desires and passions, preserving that from their enemies, and not depriving [them] of any of their money but restricting himself only to what is necessary for his power.

The one who is virtuous in truth—namely, the one who, when he rules them, determines their actions and directs them toward happiness—is not made a ruler by them. If he chances to rule them, he is soon deposed or killed, or his rulership is disturbed and challenged. The same holds for [102] the rest of the ignorant cities: each of them wants only to be ruled by someone who sets its choices and desires before it, makes the path to them easy, gains them for them, and preserves them for them. They reject the rulership of the virtuous and censure it. However, it is more possible and easier for the virtuous cities and the rulership of the virtuous to emerge from the necessary and democratic cities than from the other [ignorant] cities.

[g. Summary]

118. What is necessary, wealth, enjoyment of pleasures and play, and honor may be gained by conquest and domination and may be gained by other means. So the four cities<sup>59</sup> are divided in this manner. Similarly, of the rulerships intent on these four [things] or [any] one of them, some are intent on obtaining it by domination and conquest and some by means other than these. Those [individuals] who procure these things by domination and conquest and safeguard what they attained by resistance and conquest need to have strong and powerful bodies; to be cruel, crude, coarse, and contemptuous of death in their moral habits; to be of the opinion that it is not worth living without gaining what is important; to have an art of using weapons; and to be good in deliberating about how to conquer others. This is common to all of them.

59. Namely, the necessary, depraved or plutocratic, vile or hedonistic, and timocratic cities.

119. In addition to these [things], those who pursue the enjoyment of pleasure happen to be voracious and to love eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Among them are those [a] who are so dominated by softness and luxury that their irascible faculty disintegrates, and nothing of it at all or [only] a trifling extent is to be found in them.

And among them are those [b] who are overwhelmed by anger, with its psychological and bodily instruments, and by desire, with its psychological and bodily instruments, to the point that these two are strengthened and increased, thus making it possible to carry out their actions. Their deliberation is devoted to the actions of these two, and their souls are equally subservient to them.

And among these are those who are ultimately intent on the actions of desire. They put their irascible faculties and actions as instruments for arriving [103] at the desires, thereby putting their higher and loftier faculties in the service of what is more vile. That is, they put their rational faculty in the service of the irascible and desiring [faculties] and then their irascible faculties in the service of their desiring faculties. They devote their deliberation to inferring what makes the actions of anger and desire complete; and they devote the actions of their irascible faculties and their instruments to what gains the pleasure to be savored from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse, as well as to the rest of the things to be dominated and preserved for themselves—as is seen among the notables of the Turk and Arab inhabitants of the wilderness.

For common to the inhabitants of the wilderness is love of domination and great gluttony with respect to eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Therefore, women are of great importance according to them. Many of them approve of licentiousness and are not of the opinion that it is degenerate and vile, since their souls are subservient to their desires. You see many of them being pleasing to women in all they do, doing so in order to magnify their standing among women. They hold as shameful what women deem shameful, and what women find fair is fair for them. In all things, they adhere to the desires of their women. Women are in authority over many of them and are responsible for the affairs of the household. For this reason,<sup>60</sup> many of them accustom their women to luxury and do not give them over to toil; rather, they keep them in luxury and comfort, while themselves undertaking everything that requires labor, toil, and undergoing hardship.

60. The term is *sabab*; see above, sec. 109 and n. 55.

## [3. THE IMMORAL CITIES]

120. The immoral cities are the ones whose inhabitants believed in, and formed a concept of, the principles [of the existents]. They had an image of happiness and believed in it. They were guided toward, were cognizant of, and believed in the actions by which they could gain happiness. Yet they did not hold fast to any of those actions, but through their passion and will inclined toward a particular feature among the purposes<sup>61</sup> of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities—either status,<sup>62</sup> honor, domination, or something else—and they established all of their actions and faculties to be directed toward those purposes.

The kinds of these cities are as numerous as the kinds of ignorant cities, because all the actions of their inhabitants are the actions [104] of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities and their moral habits the moral habits of those inhabitants. They are distinct from the inhabitants of the ignorant cities only by the opinions in which they believe. No one at all among the inhabitants of these cities gains happiness.

## [4. THE ERRANT CITIES]

121. The errant cities<sup>63</sup> are the ones whose inhabitants receive representations of objects other than the ones we have mentioned—that is, the principles set before them and represented for them are other than those we have mentioned. The happiness set before them is other than the one that is happiness in truth, and a happiness other than that one is represented for them. And the actions and opinions prescribed for them gain nothing of happiness in truth.

## [5. THE WEEDS IN THE VIRTUOUS CITIES]

122. The weeds in the virtuous cities are of many sorts. Among them is a sort [a] that holds fast to the actions by which happiness is gained, except that in what they do they are intent not on happiness but on some other thing a human being may gain through virtue—such as honor, rulership, wealth, or something else. These [people] are called hunters.

61. Literally, “a particular thing from the purposes” (*shay' mā min aghrāq*).

62. Status (*manzila*), which has not heretofore been cited as one of the purposes of the ignorant cities, takes the place here of necessity, wealth, enjoyment of pleasure, and freedom.

63. For a more precise indication of what characterizes these cities, see n. 68 below.



And among them [i] are those who have a passion for one of the ends of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities, but the Laws of the city and its religion prevent them from it. So they apply themselves to the utterances and statements of the lawgiver<sup>64</sup> for his precepts and interpret them so as to agree with their passion, thereby embellishing that thing by their interpretation. These [people] are called distorters.

And among them are [ii] those who are not intent on distortion. But due to their poor understanding of the lawgiver's intention and their defective grasp<sup>65</sup> of his statements, they understand the Laws of the city differently from the way the lawgiver intended. So their actions fall outside the intention of the first ruler and they err without being conscious of it. These people are called schismatics.

123. Another sort [b] has already imagined the things we have mentioned, except that they are not persuaded by what they have imagined. So, for themselves and for others, they show those things to be false by arguments. In doing so, [105] they are not contending against the virtuous city. Rather, they are asking for guidance and seeking the truth.

Whoever is like this has his level of imagination elevated to things that the arguments he brings forth do not show to be false. If he is persuaded in thus being elevated, he is left there. But if he is not persuaded by that either and falls upon topics he can contend against, he is elevated to another level. It goes on like this until he is persuaded by one of these levels. But if he does not chance to be persuaded by one of the levels of imagination, he is elevated to the ranking of truth and made to understand those things as they are. At that point, his opinion becomes settled.

124. Among them, another sort [c] presents as false what they imagine. Whenever they are elevated in rank, they present it as false—even when they obtain the ranking of truth. They do all this in seeking domination alone or in seeking to embellish one of the purposes of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities to which they are inclined. So they present as false [what they imagine] in every way they can. They do not like to hear anything that strengthens happiness and truth in the soul nor any argument that embellishes them and prescribes them for the soul, but meet them

64. Here and in what follows the term translated as "lawgiver" is *wāḍī' al-sunna* and should therefore be understood as the one who sets down traditional laws. See above, sec. 82, nn. 38 and 39.

65. Literally, "defective concept" (*muqṣan taṣawwurih*).

with sham arguments that they presume will discredit happiness. In doing that, many of them are intent on appearing to be excused for inclining to one of the purposes of the inhabitants of the ignorant cities.

125. Among them is a sort [d] that imagines happiness and the principles [of the existents], but it is not within the power of their minds to form a concept of them at all. Or it is not within the power of their understanding to form a sufficient concept of them. So they present as false what they imagine and seize on the topics of contention in them. Whenever they are elevated to a level of imagination that is closer to the truth, they present it as false. It is not possible for them to be elevated to the level of truth, because it is not within the power of their minds to understand it. It may chance that many of these people present as false much of what they imagine, not because there are truly topics of contention in what they imagine, but because their imagination is defective. So, due to their poor understanding, they present that as false—not because there is a topic of contention in it. [106]

When unable to imagine something sufficiently or to grasp the true topics of contention in the places in which there are topics of contention and when unable to understand the truth, many of them presume that the one who apprehends the truth and says he has apprehended it is lying deliberately in a quest for honor or domination. Or they presume that he is a deluded zealot who also wants to present the truth as false and to vilify the one who has apprehended it. That leads many of them to presume that all people are deluded about everything they claim to have apprehended.

And that leads [i] some of them to perplexity about all objects.

And that leads [ii] some of them to be of the opinion that there is nothing accurate at all in what is apprehended and that whenever someone presumes he has apprehended something, he is lying about that<sup>66</sup> without being sure or certain of what he presumes. According to intelligent persons and in relation to the philosophers, these people are in the position of ignorant simpletons. Due to that, it is obligatory for the ruler of the virtuous city to watch over the weeds, keep them busy, and cure each sort by means of what is particularly suited to it—either expulsion from the city, punishment, imprisonment, or assigning them tasks even though they do not strive after them.

66. At this point all of the mss. except Feyzullah 1279 end.

And [iii] some of them presume that the truth is what appears to each person and what he presumes at each moment and that the truth about each thing is what someone presumes it to be.

And [iv] some of them exert themselves in making it seem that whatever has been presumed to have been apprehended up to this point is completely false and that even if there is something accurate and true, it has not yet been apprehended.

And [v] some of them imagine—as in a sleeping person's dream or as with a thing seen from afar—that there is a truth here, and it occurs to them that those who claim to have apprehended it have perhaps apprehended it or that there is among them someone who has perhaps apprehended it. In themselves, they sense that it has eluded them either because [107] apprehending it requires a long time as well as toil and hardship whereas they do not have adequate time for it nor the power to toil and persevere, because they are busy with pleasures and other things to which they have become accustomed and which it is hard for them to discard, or because they have sensed that they would not [be able to] apprehend it even if all its causes were made available to them.

Sorrow and grief occur to them due to their presuming that it is possible someone else may have seized on it. Due to envy about someone having perhaps apprehended the truth, they form the opinion to struggle by means of sham arguments to make it seem that the one who says he has apprehended it is either deluded or a liar who, in what he purports, is searching for honor, wealth, or some other thing such as to incite passion.

Many of these people sense their own ignorance and perplexity. They are pained and hurt by what they feel in themselves,<sup>67</sup> and that grieves and torments them. They find no way to remove this from themselves by means of a science that would seize on the truth, the apprehension of which would earn them pleasure. So they form the opinion to take a respite from that through recourse to the rest of the ends of the ignorant cities and to jesting and playful things. They set those down as consolation until death comes to relieve them of their lot.

Some of these people—I mean those who seek to take a respite from the torments they find in ignorance and perplexity—sometimes fancy that the [true] ends are the ones they choose and prefer, that happiness consists of these, and that the remaining human beings are deluded in what they believe. They struggle to embellish ignorant things and

67. That is, the inadequacy or lack they feel in themselves.

[ignorant] happiness. They fancy that they have come to prefer this after a long investigation of everything others purport to have apprehended, that they have rejected it only after grasping that it is not to be attained, and that they have come to this through an insight that these are the ends—not the ones those other people purport to be.

126. These, then, are the sorts [of weeds] growing among the inhabitants of the city. From their opinions, no city at all is attained, nor a large association from the multitude. But they are embedded among the inhabitants of the city as a whole.<sup>68</sup>

68. This marks the end of the discussion of the cities contrary to the virtuous city that began at sec. 92, above. Feyzullah 1279 contains an additional paragraph that is almost identical with a passage from Alfarabi's *Virtuous City*. In Richard Walzer's edition and translation, the passage occurs at the beginning of section 6, chapter 18, 286:2–288:3; and in Friedrich Dieterici's edition, *Risāla fī Arā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1895; repr. 1964), it occurs at 71:23–72:10.

As Najjar points out, the paragraph may simply be misplaced; and the text can therefore be considered complete at this point. If it does belong to the text, then the work as a whole must be considered incomplete since the paragraph terminates with an unfinished sentence and omits the part corresponding to the rest of the passage in the *Virtuous City*, namely, the rest of section 6, chapter 18 plus all of section 6, chapter 19 (288:3–328:12) in Walzer's edition and 72:10–85:7 in Dieterici's edition. Here is the passage in question: "The errant cities are generated when religion is built on some of the corrupt ancient opinions. Among them is that a faction says: 'We see that the existents we observe are contrary to one another, and each seeks to destroy the other; and we see that when each of them attains existence, along with its existence it is given something with which to preserve its existence from destruction and defend and safeguard itself from its contrary and something by which it is able to put the rest of things into its service concerning what is useful for its most excellent and continuous existence. And for many of them, there is set down that by which they conquer whatever resists them. That is set down for every contrary with respect to its contrary and whatever else is in this condition, so that every one of them is intent on safeguarding for itself the most excellent existence apart from the others. Therefore, there is set down for it what destroys.'" Whether the passage from Feyzullah 1279 is accepted as part of the text or not, it must be noted that the conclusion at sec. 126 is premature insofar as nothing has been said yet of "people who are bestial by nature" who were part of the original taxonomy set forth above in sec. 92.